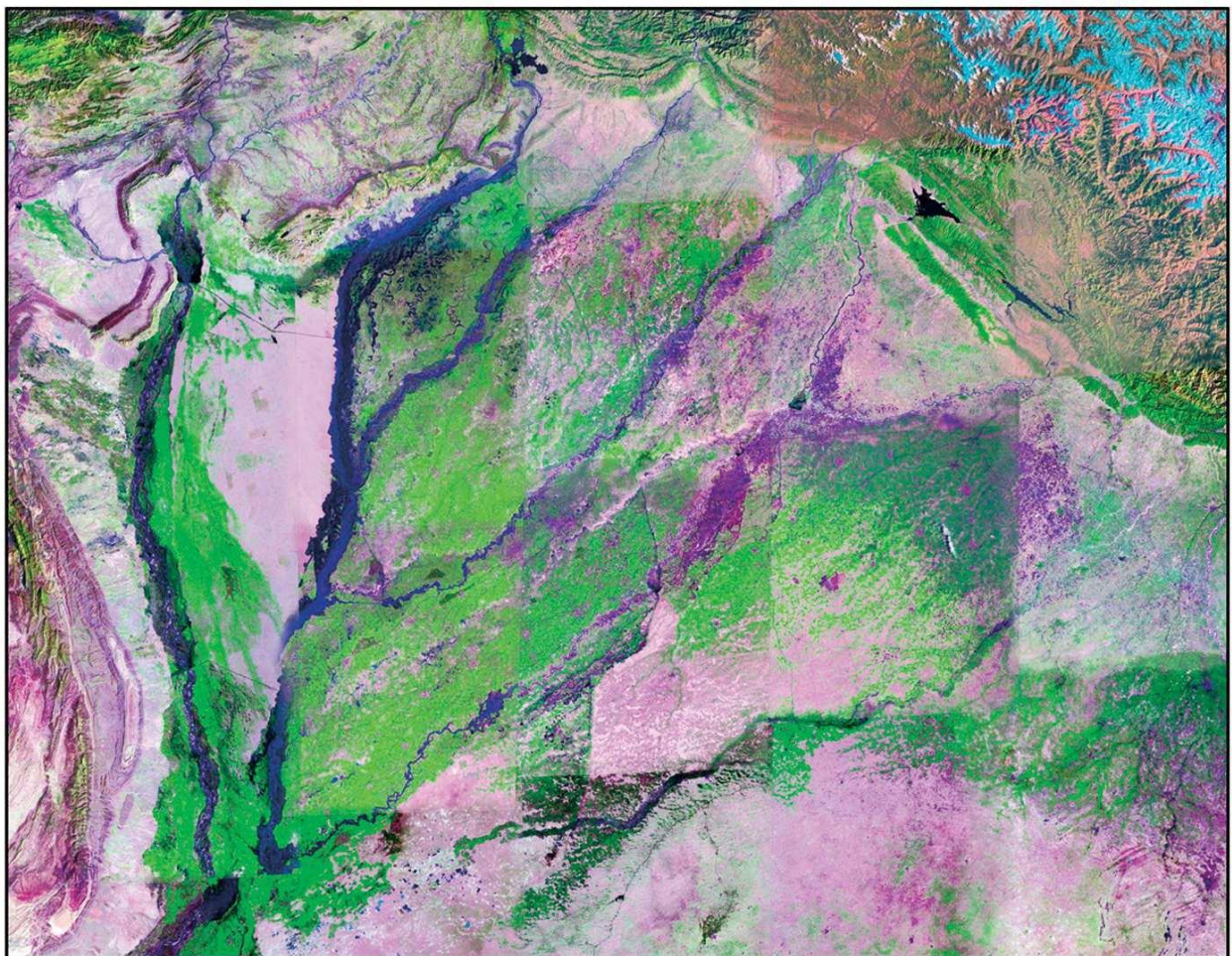


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## **Globalisation and Punjabi Identity: Resistance, Relocation and Reinvention (Yet Again!)**

**Pritam Singh**  
*Oxford Brookes University*

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Punjabiya or Punjabi identity evokes simultaneous contradictory images of a splintered identity, yet a potentially powerful economic, political and cultural force. This paper attempts to capture different aspects of this contradictory nature by situating the conflicting pulls on Punjabi identity in the context of the ongoing process of globalisation of economy, politics and culture. One aspect of globalisation that is particularly taken into account is the role of the Punjabi diaspora in giving impetus both to the powerful imagining of a unified Punjabi identity and to many divisions in the global Punjabi community. Methodologically, the paper attempts to fuse mapping the historical lineages of Punjabi identity with an analytical interrogation of the idea of Punjabiya or Punjabi identity. It concludes by outlining the potential for the emergence of a stronger Punjabi identity in spite of fissures in that identity.

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### **Introduction**

When thinking and writing about Punjabi identity, it seems we feel compelled immediately to mention one or other of those accompanying words whose purpose seems to be to qualify and problematise the subject of Punjabi identity. These accompanying words could be: examine, interrogate and explore.<sup>1</sup> Though all of these words connote some degree of hesitation, each signifies a different nuance of that hesitation. If interrogation suggests some kind of scepticism and examination hints at a neutral stance, exploration certainly has a developmental and optimistic ring about it. Behind different shades of scepticism and optimism lie not only the attempts at objective unwrapping of the limitations and potentialities of Punjabi identity but also the political projects aimed at undoing and making it.

The geographic location and the historical making of Punjab have contributed to the vicissitudes of Punjabi identity. The geographic location of Punjab as the gateway to India for traders, invaders and conquerors meant that resistance, relocation and reinvention would all play their part in constantly moulding and remoulding Punjabi identity. The region was repeatedly subjected to annexation, partition and reorganisation. For one significant period in its historical evolution, Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the early half of the nineteenth century had the characteristics of an imperial power annexing and subordinating other regions (Singh and Rai, 2009). Along with that, Punjabis have been settling abroad in large numbers since the late

nineteenth century and form one of the most dynamic diasporas. Punjabi identity therefore alternated between fragmentation and fusion, and became extremely complex and multilayered long before the onset of the more recent phase of globalisation. Globality is thus, in a sense, a *déjà vu* for Punjabis. Yet the scale is different. So is the scope.

This paper seeks to map the implications of globality for Punjabis – be they Indian, Pakistani, diasporic or a global amalgamation of all three – insofar as it induces or imposes further fragmentation or fusion. In the process, the paper attempts to answer two questions: could globality make Punjabis reinterpret their bitter-sweet past, and could it shape contemporary aspirations of Punjabis in a way which is more fused and less fragmented? I am using the words globalisation and globality as interchangeable because I recognise that although there might not be a substantial difference between them, except the nuance that tends to suggest globalisation as a process and globality as an effect or consequence, this difference might be useful to keep in mind for exploring the complexities of Punjabi identity (see Brar and Mukherjee, 2012 for a more detailed discussion on globalisation and globality).

It symbolises the contradictory and paradoxical nature of Punjabi identity that it remains a splintered entity and yet powerful idea and, perhaps, even a political and economic force. The idea and reality of three Punjabs – Indian Punjab, Pakistani Punjab and diasporic Punjab – signals immediately the powerful currents of globality implicated in Punjabi identity.<sup>2</sup>

This paper will attempt to fuse together two different but inter-related aspects of Punjabi identity – its historical tribulations and its contemporary aspirations. It first takes up an historical overview of the upswings and downswings in the evolution of Punjabi identity and then analyses the contemporary challenges and opportunities globality poses to it. Applying the method of fusing the historical and contemporary aspects, references are made to current developments while discussing the historical dimensions and, conversely, history is brought into play while discussing more recent developments.

### **Lineages of Punjabi identity: cycles of fusion and fragmentation**

Any national identity has several aspects that go into its formation. It could be the economic life cycle that sustains and reproduces the community, and through that imparts a unifying character to the community's mode of living. It could be the emergence of a common language as the highest form of communication between the members of the community. It could be its cultural way of life and forms of articulation of leisure consumption – music, songs, dances and humour. It could be the day-to-day living: cooking and eating food, daily rituals of cleanliness and conceptions of sexual activity. It could be birth, marriage and death ceremonies. It could be the modes of aesthetic imagination and articulation – embroidery, painting, sculpture and jewellery, etc. It could be patterns of social organization – egalitarian or hierarchical relations between men and women, and between young and old.<sup>3</sup>

It could be conceptions of respect, honour and humiliation. It could be forms of showing love, affection, solidarity, betrayal, revenge and hatred. It could be conceptions of the relationship between human beings, nature and God. This list can be expanded. If we were to attempt to do so, one thing which, I think, would certainly deserve an important place would be the experience and memory of living as a political community, that is, one having a sovereign state of its own.<sup>4</sup>

The suggestion that there are unifying aspects of living together that constitute a community and impart in it an identity is not meant to suggest that there are no internal conflicts in the community.<sup>5</sup> However, in spite of a variety of possible internal conflicts and contestations, what constitutes a distinctive community is the presence of some over-arching unifying aspects. A broad view of the historical evolution of Punjabi people would suggest that they share a large number of the features mentioned above and, on that basis, there are solid material and moral grounds to argue the case for a unifying and common Punjabi identity. However, it is necessary to recognise the counter-acting tendencies working against the common Punjabi identity in order to fully grasp the potentialities and limitations of repeated attempts at reinvention of Punjabi identity. Three aspects of Punjabi life – religion, language and script – can justifiably be said to have played the most critical role in shaping the contestation over Punjabi identity.<sup>6</sup> The emergence of the Sikh faith in the fifteenth century and its subsequent evolution have decisively shaped the modes of influence of religion, language and script on the articulation of Punjabi identity. Khushwant Singh (1999) has interpreted the rise of Punjabi language and Sikh religion as an expression of the emergence of a distinctive Punjabi identity out of the interaction between a large variety of linguistic and racial groups who came to Punjab, settled here and mixed with the local people. He writes:

The Punjab, being the main gateway into India, was fated to be the perpetual field of battle and the first home of all the conquerors. Few invaders, if any, brought wives with them, and most of those who settled in their conquered domains acquired local women. Thus the blood of many conquering races came to mingle, and many alien languages – Arabic, Persian, Pushto, and Turkish – came to be spoken in the land. Thus, too, was the animism of the aboriginal subjected to the Vedantic, Jain, and Buddhist religions of the Aryans, and to the Islamic faith of the Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Persians, and Afghans. Out of this mixture of blood and speech were born the Punjabi people and their language. *There also grew a sense of expectancy that out of the many faiths of their ancestors would be born a new faith for the people of the Punjab.*

By the end of the 15th century, the different races that had come together in the Punjab had lost the nostalgic memories of the lands of their birth and begun to develop an attachment to the land of their adoption. *The chief factor in the growth of Punjabi*

*consciousness was the evolution of one common tongue from a babel of languages.*

Although the Punjabis were sharply divided into Muslims and Hindus, attempts had been made to bring about a rapprochement between the two faiths and a certain desire to live and let live had grown among the people. *It was left to Guru Nanak and his nine successors to harness the spirit of tolerance and give it a positive content in the shape of Punjabi nationalism.* (pp. 13-14, italics added)

Grewal (1999) refers to an earlier period in Punjabi history to suggest the emergence of a distinctive Punjabi culture out of interaction between a diverse range of racial, linguistic and religious groups:

... during the first half of the first millennium before Christ, new tribes poured into the Saptasindhu [seven rivers], gradually obliging the bearers of the Vedic culture to move eastwards, into the Kurukshetra region first and then into the Jamuna-Ganges Doab and the upper Ganges plains. With their rather 'puritanical' values they began to look upon the people of the 'Punjab' as outside the pale of their culture. Among the peculiarities of the 'Punjabis', it is mentioned that they traded in wool and in horses; they took to sea-voyages; they loved fighting; they ate garlic and onion and they ate the flesh of fowls, sheep, donkeys, pigs, camels and cows; they drank alcohol and their women sang and danced with them in an inebriate state. The tempo of social change was reinforced by the advent of the Greeks, Parthians, Shakas and the Kushanas. Indeed, the Kushana empire became the melting pot of Iranian, Chinese, Roman and Indian cultures, and almost every aspect of life and culture was 'revolutionised'. The philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism was now expounded in languages other than Sanskrit. Imbibing, assimilating and synthesising the various cultural trends of Asia, the people of the region [Punjab] developed an elastic and resilient frame of mind. (pp. 43-44)

It is reasonable to argue that the emergence of a distinctive Punjabi culture, Punjabi language and a Punjabi religion are different milestones in the evolution of a distinctive Punjabi identity. Sikhism as a distinctive Punjabi religion (Ballard 1999) introduced Gurmukhi as a script of the Punjabi language during the period of Guru Angad (1504-52), the immediate successor of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh faith. This raised the status of Punjabi language written in Gurmukhi script to a sacred language in opposition to the older sacred languages of Sanskrit and Arabic (Shackle 2003). Geographical location, economic way of life, cultural characteristics, the development of Punjabi language and its own script (Brandt 2012) and the emergence of a distinctive Punjabi religion all contributed in diverse ways to



the formation of a Punjabi identity which made the people of the Punjab region stand out in a distinctive way from the rest of India.<sup>7</sup>

### **The rise and decline of the sovereign Punjabi state**

The emergence of the sovereign state of Punjab in 1799 under Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a moment of crowning glory in the evolution of a distinctive Punjabi identity. It appeared to be a teleological culmination of a distinctive national identity eventually achieving a sovereign state of its own. Punjab existed as a sovereign state for fifty years (1799-1849) before it was annexed by the British in 1849 and merged with the rest of India under one unified imperial rule. The fact that the annexation of Punjab was accomplished by the British through the Bengal Army, whose soldiers came predominantly from North India, created a permanent fault-line in relations between Punjabis, especially Sikhs, and the 'Hindustanis' from North India whom the Punjabis called Purabias or *kala*. This fault-line became further entrenched when the Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus took revenge against the Purabias in the 1857 uprising by siding with the British (Chatterjee, 2007; Dalrymple, 2006; and Singh 2007).

### **Colonial conquest, the early phase of globalisation and splintering of Punjabi identity**

If with the emergence of the sovereign Punjabi state in 1799 the composite Punjabi identity had reached its peak, the disintegration of this state in 1849 initiated the process of decline and splintering of Punjabi identity. Punjab was thrown into the vortex of the early phase of globalisation through the British conquest of Punjab in 1849. Punjabi identity faced the toughest ever challenge and threat to its solidity, coherence and purpose. Not only had the Punjabi nation lost its own sovereign state, which was its protector, patron and promoter, it also experienced heightened and painful dislocation with the economic, political and cultural onslaught of the most powerful imperialist state of the time. Instead of offering any combined resistance to the expanding military, economic and cultural power of the colonial state, the defeated, humiliated and demoralised Punjabis found themselves scrambling for minor economic crumbs and concessions. The Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs were incorporated in large numbers into the imperialist army and Punjabi Hindus into the civil service and trading opportunities offered by the colonial administration and economy (Ali, 1989; Talbot, 1991; Mazumdar, 2003, Yong 2005). The existing occupational divisions in Punjabi society along religious lines became further reinforced and magnified by this colonial management of Punjabi economic needs, compulsions and aspirations. These coterminous divisions were to play a negative corrosive role in later attempts to forge a composite Punjabi identity during both the colonial and post-colonial eras. Punjabi Muslims and Punjabi Sikhs became more entrenched in the agrarian economy and Punjabi Hindus into the service sector. The development of the



Canal Colonies, one of the most ambitious politico-economic development projects undertaken by the colonial rulers in Punjab, offered tempting opportunities to peasants, soldiers, traders and professionals. The majority of the peasants and soldiers were Muslims and Sikhs, and the majority of the traders and professionals were Hindus (Ali, 1989; Omissi, 1994; Mukherjee, 2005; Singh, 2008a). The lure of careers and economic gains in the expanding imperial economy left Punjabi identity dislocated, disoriented and disunited. The Punjabi nation celebrated in the lyrical poetry of Shah Mohammed for its brave resistance during the Anglo-Punjab Wars of the 1840s against British expansionism (D. Singh, 1999) now experienced, just a decade later, a negation of its past glory. The project of a composite Punjabi identity was dead. There were no signs of rediscovery, recovery and reinvention, for the time being at least. Sporadic and isolated attempts at resistance, even armed resistance, such as by the legendary Kukas, were crushed ruthlessly. The conquering British rulers dealt very harshly with such defiant sections of the Punjabi community while simultaneously showing generosity to those sections which accommodated. The political economy of carrot-and-stick policy was in operation in its classic form, subsequently appropriated by the Indian and Pakistani elites who captured power in the post-colonial nation states.

In the late nineteenth century, Punjab saw two diametrically opposite tendencies concerning Punjabi identity. One saw a three-way religious fragmentation of Punjabi identity – Muslim, Hindu and Sikh – as a result of the emergence of religious reformist movements in the three main religious communities of Punjab in opposition to the spread of Christianity supported by the imperial rulers. The resistance of the three Punjabi religious communities to the cultural-religious onslaught of ‘imperialism’ in the form of Christianity could, in theory, have been the basis of Punjabi unity but, in practice, it sharpened religious identities and boundaries among the three communities (Oberoi, 1994). It is important to note here the contradictory nature of globalising imperialism by acknowledging its contribution in giving birth to another segment of Punjabi identity which remains almost totally neglected in academic discourse on Punjabi identity. The process of imperial cultural penetration into Punjab gave birth to a fourth religious component of Punjabi identity – Punjabi Christians. The Christian missionaries were pioneers in the establishment of modern printing techniques and facilities in the Punjabi language. Most of Punjabi Christians were converts from the Dalit sections, primarily from Punjabi Hindus but also from Sikhs and Muslims. These Punjabi Christians remain one section of the Punjabi community that is most committed to the promotion of Punjabi language.<sup>8</sup>

The second tendency which was opposed to the fragmentation of Punjabi identity was in the political-economic domain, in the form of the emergence of the Unionist Party in Punjab. This was a class-based political alliance of the peasantry – especially of its elite sections – of the three main religious communities of Punjab. The party tried to invent a third way beyond the demands for India and Pakistan. It toyed with the idea of an independent Punjab. Nazar Tiwana’s personal memoir of his father, Khizr Hayat Khan

Tiwana, who was the last premier of the unified Punjab and the leader of the Punjab Unionist Party from 1942 to 1947, provides us a rare glimpse into the world view of this great Punjabi nationalist who opposed Jinnah and the 1947 partition of India from a Punjabi nationalist perspective. As a last ditch effort to save Punjab's partition, he tried to tempt the British into accepting his proposal for carving out Punjab as an independent political entity different from both India and Pakistan but part of the larger British empire. Nazar Tiwana writes: 'Towards the end of his tenure of office, he floated the idea that Punjab should become a self-governing dominion within the British Empire. This can be documented from the official records, although the British ignored this proposal because it did not suit their strategic purpose' (Tiwana, 1999, p. 256).<sup>9</sup> It appeared for a moment that there was flicker of a chance that the Punjabis could have got back from the British the sovereign Punjabi state the British had annexed in 1849. That would have been true decolonisation for Punjab. However, the events of 1947 compounded the tragedy of Punjab. If in 1849 Punjab had lost its sovereignty, it had at least kept its united territorial entity intact. In 1947, it lost even its united territorial entity. Punjab was partitioned into two – West Punjab becoming a part of Muslim Pakistan and the East Punjab becoming part of Hindu majority, though formally secular, India.<sup>10</sup>

### **Post-colonialism and competitive nationalisms**

The emergence of the two nation states of India and Pakistan relocated the two Punjabs in two very different situations. The Pakistan Punjab became politically dominant in Pakistan but at the cost of surrendering regional Punjabi identity (Samad, 1995). Indian Punjab, a relatively small state in the Indian federation, saw a vigorous twenty-year battle for the creation of a Punjabi speaking state, but remained, politically, a marginal state in the political power dynamics of the Indian federal state in spite of its impressive success in meeting India's food needs (Singh, 2008). Indian Punjab also witnessed competing claims of secular Indian nationalism, Hindu nationalism, Sikh nationalism and Marxist internationalism relate to each other and to Punjabi identity in a range of contradictory forms (P. Singh, 1997 and 2002). The creation of a Punjabi speaking state on November 1, 1966 was a major milestone in the strengthening of linguistically oriented Punjabi identity. This was the first time in its history that the Punjabi language acquired the status of official language of a state – a status it did not have even when, under Ranjit Singh, Punjab was a sovereign state. This great victory of the Punjabi language was marred by the denial of Chandigarh, a Punjabi speaking city, as the sole capital of Punjab due to the Hindu majority character of Chandigarh's population. It was a setback to Punjabi identity due to religious identity being given priority over linguistic identity. The limbo status of Chandigarh is a continuous reminder of a fault-line in the making of Punjabi identity (Singh, 2008).

**Diaspora, a higher stage of globalisation and Punjabi identity: new challenges and opportunities**

Silently and slowly, another force relating to Punjabi identity which has been emerging is the growth of a Punjabi diaspora (Singh, 2012). The spatial and cultural relocation of Punjabis to the West from the 1960s onwards has opened a new space for articulation of the common dimensions of Punjabi identity. Parallel to and opposed to this articulation of shared Punjabi identity is the phenomenon of a section of the diaspora becoming a major player in articulating sectarian divisions in Punjabi identity (Tatla, 1999). The contradictory voice of this diaspora has acquired special significance in the accelerating process of the globalisation of the world economy and media. The process of globalisation has opened hitherto unknown opportunities for exchange of commodities and ideas and, to a lesser extent, of labour between India and Pakistan, and between India/Pakistan and the rest of the world. The temptations of economic gains from increased trade relations between Indian Punjab and Pakistani Punjab have ignited a series of reinventions of common Punjabi heritage and identity. This process, however, is uneven. While cultural exchanges based on shared culture and literature are leading the way, progress on the economic front is being hampered by geo-political considerations. Due to increased cross-border cultural exchanges, the global Punjabi diaspora's imagination has suddenly been fired by the realisation of their power as possible catalysts in the making of a global Punjabi identity. The organising of world Punjabi conferences has become their theatre of action for the project of global Punjabi identity. New technological possibilities of instant translation between different scripts of Punjabi language have removed many barriers of communication and national borders. Magazines and websites publishing Punjabi literature simultaneously in different scripts are springing up. Pan-Punjabi organizations such as the Academy of the Punjab in North America (APNA <http://www.apnaorg.com/>) are playing a key role in forging common cultural ties of Punjabiyat. These attempted reinventions of common Punjabi identities unsettle many sensibilities of Indian nationalism and Pakistani nationalism. The projected scenarios of global Punjabi identity and the voices of attempted reinventions of common Punjabi identity are viewed nervously by Indian and Pakistani nationalists as potential critiques of the legitimacy of these two nation states. Fear that globalisation weakens the nation state accentuates the nervousness of the nation states of India and Pakistan. Punjabi nationalists, on the other hand, view with glee the benefits that might accrue to them from the tendency of globalisation to weaken the nation state. Both the nervousness of the Indian and Pakistani nationalists and the glee of the Punjabi nationalists might be overplayed because globalisation is a contradictory and complex process with uncertain outcomes.

The diaspora, like all other social entities under capitalism, is highly differentiated. The over-activity of the intellectual elite of the diaspora in the cause of global Punjabi identity seems to overshadow the mundane day-to-day life of ordinary diasporic existence. Cleavages of religion, caste, language and

script have not disappeared; in some instances they have become stronger than they are in the homeland. For example, there is much more day-to-day contact between Sikhs and the Hindus in Punjab than there is in the West. Similarly, there is much more day-to-day contact between different caste groups in Punjab than there is in the West. In the hectic cycle of day-to-day life, Sunday seems to offer the only time-slot for socialising. The vast majority of Punjabi settlers in the West use almost regularly a part of Sunday's socialising time-slot to visit temples, mosques, gurdwaras and churches. This weekly experience of religious socialising gives them autonomous socio-cultural space but does not contribute to strengthening of cross-religious bonds.

It is the new generations of Punjabis in the diaspora who are experimenting with new modes of living and are attempting to not only transcend the barriers of religion and caste but also forge artistic and social ties with Afro-Caribbean culture, giving birth to the idea and experience of hybrid identities (Bauman and Banerji 1990). Bhangra music in its diverse forms has grown to become the focal point of Punjabi and hybrid identities; it has also spawned new interest in learning Punjabi language in diverse scripts (Sharma et al., 1996; Kaur and Kalra, 1999). The impact of the locational differences in the Punjabi diaspora (e.g. British Punjabi diaspora, North America Punjabi diaspora, East Asian Punjabi diaspora, East Africa diaspora etc.) on the differences in relating to Punjabi identity is a subject for further exploration to understand the complexities of the Punjabi diaspora's relationship to Punjabi identity especially on issues of caste, religion, language and region (for an initial attempt to see the differences regarding caste in the UK and Canada, see Singh, 2012a)

The shared Punjabi identity has received a massive boost from the popular appeal of Punjabi language and culture in cinema and film music. Bollywood has become a site and carrier of celebration of the shared Punjabi culture, with some leading Bollywood producers and directors (such as Yash Chopra) having found something of a formula for success by including Punjabi cultural themes in a film's narrative (Das, 2006). Even the image of the *sardar* has been transformed in this new enterprise of Punjabi celebration: no longer presented as a buffoon, the Singh is now a king, powerful, smart, sexy and glamorous (Singh, 2010). A Bollywood film is considered commercially successful if it runs well in Punjab and in the Punjabi diaspora, while the large market of Pakistani Punjab has further added to the economic attraction of celebrating shared Punjabi culture. Harbhajan Mann has shot to stardom as a lead male actor of many new Punjabi films (Abbi, 2012); while in Pakistan, Punjabi films in the genre of *Maula Jat*, representing the brave and rustic Punjabi farmer, have been a roaring success. Sultan Rahi, the star of many films in this genre, has become the most popular cinema hero in Pakistan, and Punjabi cinema has in recent years eclipsed the previously dominant Urdu cinema (Ayers, 2008).

The emotional appeal of common and shared Punjabi identity has not died down. However, in the globalising world of today, the reinvented global Punjabi identity has to compete with global Hinduism, global Sikhism, global

Islam and global Christianity. In the contest between Punjabi identity and globalised religion whether in India, Pakistan or in the diaspora, the old contest between language and culture on one side and the religion on the other is being replayed. Religion could cannibalise language and culture, but equally powerfully it could be said that people's linguistic affinities and cultural ties are of such enduring strength and intensity that they can overcome the challenge of religious sectarianism. As long as Punjabi language is alive and kicking, there will always be hope for some form of Punjabi identity (Coventry, 2008). Languages do die but Punjabi language has a long history, it has a highly developed literature and is spoken (if not read and written) by many millions of people not only in the Indian and Pakistani Punjab but in almost every continent of the world. Globalisation may create threatening tendencies for Punjabi language but it could equally well spur new interest and new opportunities for the development of not only Punjabi language but also of a diverse range of Punjabi art forms. I would further add that even if one were to argue that globalisation may not create any opportunities but only threats, that does not mean that the future is shaped only by globalisation. *I wish to emphasise this point because it has remained undeveloped in this paper that the power of globalisation has limits.* The history of societies, including linguistic communities, is not shaped only by external forces such as globalisation. It is also shaped by the internal strength and dynamic of societies and linguistic communities.

In the conflict between religion and language I have mentioned above, the role of globalisation is not clear. The scenario of threat and opportunity globalisation creates for language is equally applicable to religion. In the case of Punjabi language, the fact that there exists a Punjabi speaking state (however limited its powers be in India's federal structure) whose *raison d'être* is Punjabi language means no force of globalisation can liquidate this language. I cannot ever imagine that over twenty million inhabitants of Punjab in India will all start speaking English or Hindi if one were to equate the power of America-led globalisation with English and that of Indian hegemony with Hindi. In spite of all the economic temptations of globalisation and the power of Hindi hegemony, the Punjabi language in Indian Punjab is flourishing. The continuous increase in the circulation of Punjabi newspapers is one indicator among many of the vibrant vitality of the Punjabi language.<sup>11</sup> Punjabi language has very little, if any, state support in Pakistan but the indications are that this is likely to change in favour of Punjabi in the future (Ayers, 2008). In the Punjabi diaspora, interest in Punjabi language is certainly on the increase even if it is not phenomenal. If the state of Punjabi language suggests a healthy existence, it is a positive sign of the continued strength of Punjabi identity. This is not to suggest that Punjabi language is the most important marker of Punjabi identity. It is possible that a shared Punjabi culture which may be difficult to define but very palpable in lived experience may be the main marker of Punjabi identity. Along with shared Punjabi culture, Punjabi language will remain an important marker of Punjabi identity. So far, there is no strong evidence to suggest that the forces of globalisation have harmed the

growth of Punjabi language and culture though, in future, in relating to globalisation, Punjabi language, culture and identity will have to continuously negotiate with, resist, cooperate, outmanoeuvre and use the contradictory forces of globalisation. For Punjabi identity in the context of globality, relocation and reinvention of itself is necessary not only for survival but also for further consolidation and growth.

### **Summary and conclusion**

Punjabi identity has a long lineage. It has gone through cycles of fusion and fragmentation. It reached its peak with the emergence of a sovereign Punjabi state between 1799 and 1849. The early entry of globalisation in Punjab through the annexation of this sovereign state by the expanding British empire led to splintering of Punjabi identity. Though during the ninety-eight years of British rule in Punjab, there were conflicting tendencies of fragmentation and fusion, the ultimate decline of colonialism ended up in terrible division of Punjab and Punjabi identity. Punjabis renegotiated their identities in Indian Punjab, Pakistan Punjab and in the diaspora. The diasporic experience has raised the prospect of recovery of Punjabi identity as a global Punjabi identity transcending the barriers of nation states. The diaspora itself is a differentiated entity. The intellectual diaspora, the elite sections of the diaspora and the politically progressive sections of the diaspora inspired by socialist internationalism articulate aspirations for global Punjabi identity. The major section of the diaspora continues to rely upon religion as an important mode of organising social life. This has given a fillip to globalised religious visions that undermine Punjabi identity. However, the new generations of the Punjabi diaspora are reinventing Punjabi identity through hybrid music and art forms.

Punjabi language remains an important marker of Punjabi identity. Due to different ideological and cultural hegemonies, the development of Punjabi language remains an uneven phenomenon in India, Pakistan and the diaspora. The encouragement to the development of Punjabi language in Punjab after the creation of the Punjabi speaking state in 1966 is not matched in Pakistan where, in fact, there has been discouragement of the Punjabi language and identity by the Punjabi elites that control state and military power, who view the discouragement of all regional identities, including their own, as conducive to the maintenance of their centralised power structure. Though there is no clear evidence that globalisation, on the whole, has harmed or helped the development of Punjabi language, Punjabi identity needs to constantly renegotiate with the cultural and economic forces unleashed by globalisation. This renegotiation is necessary for continuous renewal, relocation and reinvention if Punjabi identity is to not only survive but also thrive.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A book based on papers submitted to the first international conference on Punjabi identity held at Coventry University in 1994 gave prominence to the word 'exploration' in its title *Globalisation and the Region: Explorations in Punjabi Identity* (Singh and Thandi, 1996). The title of the revised edition of this book, *Punjabi Identity in a Global Context* (Singh and Thandi, 1999), seemed to suggest a more confident take on Punjabi identity. When I suggested to my publisher (Oxford University Press) that the original title should be kept for the revised edition, the publishing team came back to me with marketing feedback that suggested that there was a clear preference for Punjabi identity to be in the main title rather than in the subtitle. It appeared to me that the exploratory nature of Punjabi identity suggested in the first attempt (1996) reflected a hesitant approach to the subject while in the second attempt (1999) a more confident view had developed about the subject and the project of Punjabi identity. Since that first attempt in 'exploring' Punjabi identity, the level of globalisation has increased, and the idea of Punjabi identity has certainly acquired more weight and acceptance, though it still provokes contestation from many points of view which may themselves be opposed to each other (see Ahmed, 2007; Jodhka, 1997; P. Singh, 1999, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The Punjab Research Group (PRG), an academic group which has been focusing on seminar discussions of ongoing research on Punjab since its launch in 1984, defines three Punjabs in a slightly different way – a historic pre-1947 Punjab, the post-1947 Punjab divided between two nation states of India and Pakistan, and the diasporic Punjab. The Association for Punjab Studies (UK) launched a journal, *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, in 1994 which carried the same categorisation of Punjab. The journal's blurb stated: "The *International Journal of Punjab Studies* provides international and comparative research on the historical pre-1947 Punjab, the Indian and Pakistani Punjab after 1947, and the Punjabi Diaspora". The journal, renamed *Journal of Punjab Studies* in 2005 as a collaborative project between the Association for Punjab Studies (UK) and the Centre for Sikh and Punjab Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara (USA), defines Punjab by highlighting its history and geography as a region. Its blurb states, "Centred around the cities of Amritsar and Lahore, the region of Punjab spreads from Delhi in the Southeast to Peshawar in the Northwest, and connects the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and the Middle East. Beginning with the Indus Valley Civilisation, the region has played a pivotal role in the cultural, economic, and political development of India." With this geographically focused definition of Punjab as a region in the Indian sub-continent, the journal



thinks of only two Punjabs: “The *Journal of Punjab Studies* is a forum for interdisciplinary and comparative scholarship on the region of Punjab and the Punjabis living overseas.” If we combine all the above different descriptions of Punjab, we come up with four Punjabs – pre-1947 historic Punjab, post-1947 Indian Punjab, post-1947 Pakistani Punjab, and the Punjabi diaspora. In order to capture fully the diversity and unity of Punjabi identity, we can add a fifth dimension – the global Punjabi identity. The global Punjabi identity is more than diasporic Punjabi identity. It is a trans-territorial identity. It includes the diasporic Punjabis but also the Punjabi inhabitants of Indian Punjab, Pakistan Punjab and the Punjabis settled in the other states of India and Pakistan. This last set of Punjabis could be viewed as internal diaspora- people living away from their linguistic homeland but still in a territorial space and a nation state which incorporates their homeland. See the discussion on the idea of Punjabiyat at the PRG website <http://theprg.co.uk/2010/06/03/the-idea-of-punjabiyat-by-pritam-singh/>

<sup>3</sup> The caste hierarchy, both as social organisation and as ideological world view, is a unique and specific institution that emerged in the evolution of Hindu civilisation. The institution of caste imparts a distinctive identity to Hinduism. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to examine the possibilities of this institution solidifying, mutating or disintegrating in the future, and the implications of all these possibilities for the distinctive identity of Hinduism. The caste and gender dimensions of Punjabi identity are not discussed in this paper. See Bachu (1999) for integrating gender, migration and globalisation into a consideration of Punjabi migrant women’s identity. See also Dhanda (2009) for the continuing relevance of caste identity in inter-personal relations amongst Punjabi youth and the ways in which dalit response to casteism is being articulated.

<sup>4</sup> Punjab existed as an independent sovereign state for fifty years (1799 to 1849) before it was annexed by the expanding British empire (Chopra, 1960). During Ranjit Singh’s reign and shortly after annexation, his rule was seen by all Punjabis as a Punjabi state and he is remembered as the ‘Lion of Punjab’ (Khushwant Singh, 1997). The later splintering of Punjabi identity has resulted in the collective remembrance of Ranjit Singh being a contested terrain. On one hand, he is represented by Sikh nationalists as the realisation of the Sikh dream of statehood and political sovereignty, and, on the other, he is viewed by Punjabi nationalists as a symbol of composite Punjabi identity and is celebrated as a secular Punjabi ruler. Tahir (1999), analysing the work of a Punjabi poet, Qadiryar (b. 1802) who was a contemporary of Ranjit Singh, argues that the poet identified with Ranjit Singh’s kingdom through his *Var* (ballad) that celebrates the military victories of the Sikh warrior Hari Singh Nalwa over the Pathans and Afghans.

<sup>5</sup> The aspect of an over-arching unity in group identity in spite of internal differences has universal relevance. For example, Isaac Deutscher (1980), the celebrated biographer of Leon Trotsky, wrote that although the Russian

peasantry under Stalinist rule was internally differentiated, yet its unity as a class born out of its socio-economic life in the rural economy was the cause both of its strength of resistance to Stalinist collectivisation and of the severity of the Stalinist terror unleashed against it.

<sup>6</sup> It would be wrong to prioritise religion and religious differences over all other markers of identity to such an extent that all unifying elements are reduced to the point of denial. Such a prioritisation would amount to essentialising religion and religious differences. For an argument which justifiably highlights the importance of religious differences but, unfortunately, approximates an essentialist view of religious differences and their role in the denial of possibilities of Punjabi identity, see G. Singh (2006). He grounds identity so firmly in the religious domain, at least in the case of Punjabis, that he views any conceptualisation of Punjabi identity that transcends religious boundaries as romantic. Such an essentialist mode of argument is flawed because essentialism is mono-dimensional, reductionist and simplistic. It fails, therefore, to capture the multi-layered, contradictory and complex nature of human existence and experience. Another Punjabi scholar who has devoted considerable energy to the study of Punjab's partition is so overwhelmed by the ferocity of sectarian violence during the 1947 partition that he feels pessimistic about the prospect of unifying Punjabi identity (Ahmed 2012). He expressed his pessimism more strongly in a personal communication with me but then qualified this pessimism by suggesting in an optimistic tone that we Punjabis 'have to defeat them [sectarian religious divisions] philosophically and morally and one day who knows the coming generations may be wiser than our previous generation or us' (email September 24, 2012). Ahmed's approach suggests an open-ended future.

<sup>7</sup> Spate, the famous biographer of the Indian sub-continent, highlighted Punjab's rivers as its distinctive identity markers: "...the Five Rivers – from west to east Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej – which give the province its name and unite in the southwest to form the Panjnad or Five Streams" (Spate and Learmonth 1972, p. 516). Khushwant Singh points to the overall geographical unity of Punjab imparting to it an identity that was distinct from the neighbouring countries and the rest of India (Khushwant Singh, 1999, p. 3). See also Shackle (2003).

<sup>8</sup> I found during several of my field visits to Punjab's countryside in the last few years that Punjabi dalits, a substantial section of whom are Christians, are avid readers of Punjabi newspapers. A part of the expanding circulation and economic success of Punjabi newspapers in the Indian Punjab can be certainly attributed to these reading practices of Punjabi Christians. It might be relevant here to mention an interesting aspect of the life of diaspora Punjabi Christians. According to my Punjabi Christian informants, Bedford has the largest and Oxford the second largest component of Punjabi Christians settled in the UK. A teacher employed by Oxford City Council to teach Punjabi language to children who opt for Punjabi as a subject in their secondary education told me

that she had a class of twenty-two students out of whom one was a Sikh, one a Hindu and the remaining twenty were Punjabi Christians. On further probing the matter, I came to the conclusion that the middle class Hindus and Sikhs who come from Punjab to cities like Oxford get relatively easily inducted into the middle class life style here and converse easily in English with their children. The Punjabi Christians, a majority of whom can converse comfortably only in Punjabi with their children, needed their children to learn Punjabi language. These Punjabi Christians successfully pressurised one of the local churches they visit to conduct one of the religious services in Punjabi. The notice board of the East Oxford Community Centre displays in Punjabi along with English the timetable for religious services conducted there. These Punjabi Christians are one of the important components of the readership of Punjabi newspapers, magazines and books published in the UK and Punjab. They have repositioned and relocated themselves as Punjabis and through that relocation have sought to empower themselves. During a field trip to Pakistan Punjab in May 2009, I had the privilege, through Tej Purewal's help, of meeting many Punjabi Christians in Lahore and attending their church services. These Punjabi Christians are one of the strongest practitioners and votaries of Punjabi language in Pakistan.

<sup>9</sup> Khizr Tiwana kept up his dream of a united Punjab. Nazar Tiwana reports that his father told an informal gathering of friends and family members in London in 1964: 'Those of you who do not belong to my generation will live to see Punjabi identity overcome the effects of the religious divide of 1947 and enjoy the fruits of a prosperous and happy Punjab which transcends the limitations of a geographical map' (Tiwana, 1999, p. 252). See also Talbot (1994) and Malik (1995, 1998 and 1999).

<sup>10</sup> For an argument on how the secularism of India is compromised and weakened by an institutionalised Hindu bias, see Singh (2005) on a case study of such a bias in India's constitution. See also Bajpai (2002, 2009/10, 2011) and Chiriyankandath (2002).

<sup>11</sup> The Hind Samachar group of newspapers based in Jalandhar is an Arya Samaj institution and the Arya Samaj has a long history of anti-Punjabi language campaigns (Banga, 1999; Deol, 2000). This group has been forced to start a Punjabi daily *Jagbani* in order to cash in on the growing readership for Punjabi newspapers. Similarly the Tribune group of newspapers based in Chandigarh which has been historically indifferent to the rise or decline of Punjabi language, has started a Punjabi daily, *Punjabi Tribune*, to take a share of the expanding market for Punjabi newspapers. Anderson (1991) has particularly emphasised the role of print media in collective community communications and in the construction of national identities.

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## Urdu Migrant Literati and Lahore's Culture

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After 1857, Punjab assumed extraordinary significance not only in a strategic sense but culturally too. Urdu was introduced as a vernacular primarily for administrative reasons but later on Lahore was the locus of literary activities which had lasting impact on the future course of Urdu literature. This study focuses on three migrant laureates G.W. Leitner, Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali, underscoring their contribution for ushering in Oriental learning and particularly Urdu literature into an era of modernity. They not only introduced fresh themes of poetry but also new forms of poetic expression. Similarly the institution of Anjuman-i-Punjab and its role in the cultural development of the city is yet another subject that this study brings out. Establishment of such institutions like Oriental College and the University of Punjab became possible only because of Anjuman-i-Punjab's endeavours. A series of *Mushairas*, held under the auspices of Anjuman and the impact these Mushairas had, on the literary trends, has also been teased out.

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### Introduction

Etymological reference of the word 'Lahore' gives us a compelling nudge into the world of mythology. Popular adage about its existence links Lahore with 'Loh' or 'Lava', the son of the epic hero Rama Chandra, from whom it derived its name.<sup>1</sup> Thus Lahore's early history is shrouded in the pre-historic, mythical realm. Historically speaking Lahore was mentioned *abintio* in the journals of Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang in 630 A.D. Then Ahmad bin Yahya al Baladhuri (died in 892 A.D.), an Arab chronicler, also mentions Lahore by the name of *al-Ahver*. From Abu Rehan al-Biruni's allusion to Lahore in his celebrated account *Tarikhul Hind (kitabul Hind)* its reference became an abiding feature of all the major works of Indian history.<sup>2</sup> Therefore Lahore's pre-eminence rested firmly upon the centuries old historical traditions and a geographical centrality in the plains of central Punjab, on the banks of the river Ravi. The dominating position that Lahore held in the entire Northern India dates back to the eleventh century with the Muslim conquest and city's elevation to a provincial capital. Thereafter, Delhi Sultans and Mughals both deemed the control over Lahore extremely vital for the sustenance of their control over the territories between the Indus and Yumana. That is particularly true of the Mughals and during the reign of Jahangir Lahore reached its acme as the centre of Northern India. The decline of the Mughals in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the ascendancy of Sikh chiefs and Afghan marauders frequenting Punjab, cast a shadow of gloom over Lahore. Forty years of Ranjit Singh's rule (1799-1839), however, provided Lahore some respite from the vicissitudes of the eighteenth century, principally because he made Lahore as the capital of his

empire. Not only did Punjab witness political stability but mercifully, Afghan invasions from the north also came to a halt.

It was only after annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849 that Lahore regained its position of pre-eminence. Lahore was not only the centre of a modern system of administration<sup>3</sup> it also came to reflect modernity articulated through Urdu literary genres in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly, as Intizar Hussain contends, 'soon after the fall of Delhi and Lucknow in 1857, Lahore emerged as a centre of literary activities, encouraging new trends, whose chief advocates were Hali and Azad.'<sup>4</sup> This telling contention of Intizar Hussain constitutes the principal theme of this paper. In this study three migrant laureates, Dr. Leitner, Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali and their specific role in fomenting new literary trend in Urdu literature, will form the primary focus of our analysis. However the introduction of Urdu as a vernacular in Punjab immediately after its annexation, which to many was extremely unilateral and arbitrary initiative by the British Officers of the Punjab Commission, seems an appropriate point to contextualise the contribution the three migratory laureates made in the cultural advancement of Colonial Lahore.

### **Promulgation of Urdu as Vernacular**

What is important here is to note is that prior to British rule, Persian was the official language in the Punjab, though religious schools did teach Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script. After annexation in 1849, the question of language became vexed because the vernacular terms deployed by the officials were often unintelligible to their superior officers. The 'local language' and 'the system of deciphering and translation' were at times found to be elusive because *Ahlmad* could not be trusted fully whilst translating 'the deponents'.<sup>5</sup> Hence, on Board of Administration's proposal, Urdu was adopted as the official language of the province. Since Urdu was already functional in Northern India and most of the officer corps brought over to the Punjab had served in North Western Provinces, it therefore could be of administrative convenience to them if Urdu were to be introduced as a vernacular in the Punjab. One must not lose sight of the difference of opinion among the officers on the language issue. A handful of officers such as Dr. Leitner and Robert Cust, lent support to Punjabi because it was the vernacular language and the British, it was argued, must not sacrifice it on the altar of administrative expediency. Their colleagues, scuttling it down merely as Urdu's dialect, swiftly shot down this proposal. Rehman, while drawing on the number of letters cited in Nazir Chaudhary's book *Development of Urdu as Official Language in the Punjab (1849-1947)* reveals that 'most British officers assumed that Punjabi was a rural patois of Urdu was the refined form.'<sup>6</sup>

Leitner was also of the view that both Englishmen and Indians 'connected with Delhi' were prejudiced against the Punjabi Language. Shafqat Tanveer Mirza particularly asserts that foisting of Urdu in the Punjab took effect primarily because of the influence of the lower staff (*amlah*) who mostly

hailed from Northern India.<sup>7</sup> Mirza's assertion though does not hold credence in its entirety as the British officers themselves were favourably disposed towards according Urdu the status of vernacular in the province. However, the significance of the role of the *amlah* (staff) in this regard cannot be dismissed altogether as many Hindustanis (people from Northern India, with Urdu as their native tongue) served at subordinate positions until the Mutiny in 1857 (obviously after the 1857 event they were dismissed because of their alleged sympathy for the mutineers). It seems appropriate here to state that the final decision on that crucial issue was left to the Governor-General who eventually gave a nod of approval to the recommendation of the Punjab Board of Administration. Consequently Urdu's introduction as the official language took effect in 1851, initially in the district of Lahore, along with Jhelum, Jhang and Pak Patten. By 1854, Urdu was made the official language in the entire Punjab in which the lower level of administration, judiciary and education was to be conducted. To give a wider appeal to Urdu the Government of Punjab brought out *Sarkari Akhbar*, a newspaper which contained 'a brief summary of the news of the month, abstracts of important trials and orders, changes, appointments and dismissals.'<sup>8</sup> Urdu, in fact, owed its widening popular appeal to journalism during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially through newspapers such as *Chaudvin Sadi*, *Rafique-i-Hind*, *Paisa Akhbar* and *Zamindar* to name a few.<sup>9</sup> Here it will be pertinent to explore the role of education in promoting the vernacular. For that purpose it will be imperative to highlight Wood's Despatch and the establishment of an Education Department in the Punjab. It will indeed be helpful is contextualizing the respective roles of Leitner and Col. Holroyd as both of them were associated with education.

### **The Despatch of 1854 and Vernacular as a means of Instruction**

In Punjab, after annexation, education drew Government's immediate attention and the Judicial Commissioner, Mr. Robert Montgomery, assumed the responsibility of managing education in the Province. Thus, all communications on the subject from various districts routed through him.<sup>10</sup> In September 1854, however, the judicial commissioner himself asked to be relieved of that charge. Therefore, the Financial Commissioner, Mr. D. F. Macleod took over the charge of Education.<sup>11</sup> In same year, the Despatch from the Court of Directors of the East India Company, No.49, of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1854, was instituted, which set forth 'a scheme of education for all India, far wider and more comprehensive than the Supreme, or any Local Government, could ever have ventured to suggest.'<sup>12</sup> The Despatch of 1854 prescribed seven main objects to achieve.<sup>13</sup> However, the objects that concern us here are only two, which are the establishment of separate education departments for the provinces and the emphasis on disseminating education in vernaculars and promotion of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.<sup>14</sup> Thus a separate department of education was established on January 1856 in accordance with the recommendation of Wood's Despatch. Hence the governance of Punjab

education emanated from the Director Public Instruction and three European inspectors.<sup>15</sup> It seems necessary to mention here that in the wake of the Mutiny of 1857, East India Company's rule ended and the British Crown took over the reins of power. Lord Stanley, the first Secretary of State for India, re-affirmed the policy drawn out of Wood's Despatch in 1859.<sup>16</sup> The continuity was thus ensured.

A newly created position of Director Public Instruction was filled when William Delafield Arnold (1828-1859), took over the charge.<sup>17</sup> On his sudden death in Gibraltar on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1859, Abraham Richard Fuller (1828-1867) an officer seconded from the army into the education service, assumed the charge of that post in January 1860.<sup>18</sup> Tragically, Fuller drowned to death while crossing the river Bungeel near Rawalpindi in 1867 and Colonel William Rice Moreland Holroyd (1835-1913) succeeded him, taking over the charge in February, 1868.<sup>19</sup> He was at the centre stage of the developments brought about in Urdu literature through Lahore *Mushairas*. These Mushairas conducted under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Punjab, played a seminal role in transforming Urdu language and literature.

### **Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner and Anjuman-i-Punjab**

As already stated Urdu was re-enforced as vernacular in the Punjab. That initiative wrought many influences on Punjab's culture particularly in the urban areas. The immediate fall out was that it made Punjab amenable to the literary influences from Delhi and North Western Provinces. However, before scrutinizing these influences, it is important to underline the role of the two officers in fomenting the cause of Urdu in Punjab. Besides C.M. Mcleod, Lieutenant Governor of the province, Colonel Holroyd and Dr. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, first Principal of Government College, Lahore (established in 1864) exhibited special interest in the promotion of Urdu language and literature.<sup>20</sup> Last two persons though remained at cross-purposes regarding their respective visions for the education in the Punjab; nevertheless, they were in complete accord regarding promotion of Urdu. However, the scale and intensity of Holroyd's zeal for vernacular education did not match Leitner's passion for the same. Importantly enough his vision, as we shall outline below markedly digressed from the education policy envisaged by Lord Macaulay in his famous minutes (presented in 1835).<sup>21</sup> In the following section, Leitner forms the central focus and particularly his endeavours for the establishment of Anjuman-i-Punjab, which according to Tariq Rahman was 'a zealous advocate of oriental studies' and became a platform of a new experiment of bringing in the modernist sensibilities in Urdu literature.<sup>22</sup> But before foregrounding Leitner's role in ushering Urdu literature into a new era, it will be pertinent here to provide a brief introduction to his life and career.

Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840-1899), 'an enlightened Hungarian and a naturalized Britisher',<sup>23</sup> was born to a Jewish family in Pest. He was still a toddler when his father Leopold Saphir died and 'possibly for reasons connected with the failure of the 1848 revolution in Hungary, his widow

moved with her two children to Constantinople.' There she married a medical missionary Dr. Johann Moritz Leitner (1800-1861). He had converted from Judaism to Protestantism and was attending to the Jews of the Ottoman Empire under the auspices of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. He adopted his wife's children and Gottlieb and his sister Elisabeth always referred to him as their real father. Leitner was naturally endowed with the uncanny ability to learn and master different languages. At a very young age he undertook a sojourn to Constantinople (currently Istanbul) to learn Turkish and Arabic and within two years time he had mastered both of these languages. His abilities were so remarkable that *The Times* in its obituary (25 March 1899) stated that 'as a linguist he probably had no living rival in the area of his knowledge.' Leitner subsequently worked as an interpreter in the Crimea during war. After the war ended he came to Kings College London with the intent of receiving a certificate in divinity in April 1859. In the same year, he secured a position of a lecturer at the very tender age of 19 and though still only twenty-three, he found himself situated on a coveted post of a professor in Arabic and Muslim Law. Soon afterwards, he got degrees of M.A. and a PhD from Freiburg (Germany). He also gained admission at the Middle Temple in November 1869 and was called to the Bar in November 1875, but never contemplated practicing Law.

In 1864, when Government College Lahore was founded, Leitner was appointed its first Principal, a position that he retained till his retirement from Indian service in 1886. During his stay at Lahore, Leitner, along with his contribution in various realms, started various journals in different languages like English, Urdu and Arabic. The best known among these, founded in Lahore as *Indian Public Opinion*, changed its name to the *Civil and Military Gazette*. The distinctive feature of CMG was that none other than Rudyard Kipling was once its assistant editor and it carried many of his earlier verses and stories. Leitner authored many books and reports. His *History of Indigenous Education in Punjab* came out in 1882 and is still considered as the primary source on the state of education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Punjab. Besides this he published several other treatises and books including *The Languages and Races of Dardistan* in 1889. Pritchett maintains, while drawing on Sadiq's biography on Muhammad Hussain Azad, that Leitner was 'somewhat autocratic by temperament, but a most effective popularizer and shaper of opinion.'<sup>24</sup>

Leitner breathed his last on 22 March 1899 in Bonn where he had gone to take the waters at the Godesburg spa. While there he contracted pneumonia which proved fatal. Leitner left behind several lasting legacies besides his scholarly works. Here we are concerned with the associations that he conjured up. As Emmett Davis reveals in her *Press and Politics in British Western Punjab: 1836-1947*, 'just within a year he had established three associations for the advancement of learning, two within and one outside the college'.<sup>25</sup> Those were the Societies for Debating and Essay writing, which were necessary for the students to improve their English composition and conversation, a skill much desired in Government educational institutions.<sup>26</sup> The society that he

established outside Government College was Anjuman-i-Punjab, which soon became very influential.

*Anjuman-i-Ishaat-i-Mutalib-i-Mufida-i-Punjab*, 'Society for the diffusion of useful knowledge', was the full name of Anjuman-i-Punjab and it came into existence on 21 January 1865 at Shiksha Sabha Hall, Lahore.<sup>27</sup> Anjuman set up a *Madrisa* in a building of a *path shalla*, established by Lahore Shiksha Sabha to teach Hindi and Sanskrit. The Anjuman took possession of that building and added Arabic and Persian to the curriculum.<sup>28</sup> Thus a school was set up which later on became Oriental College. The Anjuman was formed with the two-fold object of reviving the study of ancient Oriental learning and as its name succinctly suggests, of diffusing useful knowledge through the medium of the Vernacular.<sup>29</sup> Leitner was its 'dictator' and Lepel Griffin its secretary.<sup>30</sup> It had 35 original members and all of them were in government employment. Aslam Furrukhi is even more succinct when he states, 'the whole Anjuman was called into being by Government fiat.'<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Sadiq in his *magnum opus*, *A History of Urdu Literature*, circumscribes two institutions in adulatory terms, 'which hastened the Western penetration of India, the foremost in Northern India were the *Delhi College* and the *Anjuman-i-Punjab*, Lahore.'<sup>32</sup> As is alluded later in this narrative, the modernist/western trend that had a transforming impact on Lahore in fact emanated at Delhi College. It therefore becomes imperative to give a brief reference of that institution to put the establishment of the Anjuman-i-Punjab and the role of Azad and Hali in it, in a proper perspective.

The Delhi College (originally established in 1702<sup>33</sup> but revived in 1825) in 1828, at the behest of Sir Charles Metcalf, 'had an English class attached to it.'<sup>34</sup> The principal object of that 'Anglo-Indian' institution was to impart Western science and philosophy through the medium of the vernacular. The Society for the Promotion of Knowledge in India, generally known as Delhi Vernacular Translation Society was the most salient of all the features of Delhi College. The Delhi Vernacular Translation Society aimed at publishing Urdu translations of a huge number of English books of various disciplines such as philosophy, economics, history, constitutional law, mathematics, astronomy and physical sciences. Scholars and laureates of immense calibre like V. Felix Boutras, Dr Sprenger, and Francis Taylor contributed significantly in effecting 'Delhi Renaissance'. Similarly, Master Ram Chandra (1821-1880) was a very prominent Indian scholar, the avant-garde of all literary and social reforms in Northern India. He worked zealously to impart Western knowledge to the people of Delhi. But more important was Master Piyare Lal Ashoob's contribution, not only in bringing about Delhi Renaissance but also having its rub off on the Punjab too.

Piyare Lal Ashoob (1834-1914) was born, bred and educated in Delhi. Having received his education from Delhi College, he took up a position as a secretary of Delhi Society and worked quite effectively in diffusing Western knowledge (literature) among the people of his city. However, after he was transferred to the department of Education, Lahore also benefited from his talent as a laureate *par excellence*. In that department, his job was to translate



English works into Urdu. While in Lahore, he found the environment conducive for the enhancement of his literary prowess. Therefore he produced literary works of great merit like *Qisas-e-Hind*, part 1 and 3 and *Rusum-e-Hind* and also *Tarikh-i-Inglistan*. *Qisas-i-Hind* was written for a prize competition, which was Col. Holroyd's initiative; a collection of stories about India was undoubtedly Ashoob's masterpiece.<sup>35</sup> Ashoob, like Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali was an extraordinary source for transferring the influences of Delhi Renaissance over to Lahore. The transfusion of these influences to the culture of Lahore though could only come about through the agency of Anjuman-i-Punjab, which shared its orientation and principal objective with Delhi College, although former was not a teaching institution. The revival of ancient oriental learning, the advancement of popular knowledge through vernaculars, the discussion of social, literary, scientific, and political questions of interest, and the association of the learned and influential classes with the officers of the government, were the objectives of Anjuman, which were almost in complete accord with what the Delhi College professed and disseminated.<sup>36</sup>

The Anjuman set a task for itself to bring about ameliorative change among the people of the Punjab. Hence, it diversified its sphere of activities. The multiple nature of Anjuman's activities necessitated setting up of different committees with clearly defined aims. Of these, the Library Committee, the Educational Committee and the Medical Committee were noteworthy.<sup>37</sup> The Anjuman also had its own journal, the *Journal of the Anjuman-e-Punjab*. This journal had a specific aim of acquainting the local populace with English thought, the expectations of Government and current affairs, and to familiarize the Government with the needs and requirements of the people.<sup>38</sup> The Anjuman was instrumental in establishing a free library and reading room, holding public lectures and compiling educational texts and rendering them into Indian languages. On top of it all, the Anjuman saw to it that the Oriental College was established as stated earlier. That institution was founded in 1870 as an Oriental School and in 1872 it was elevated to a College and Leitner was its first Principal.<sup>39</sup> Scholar of extraordinary merit like Faiz ul Hassan Saharanpuri and Maulvi Abdul Hakim Kalanauri came to teach Arabic and Persian respectively. Both of them came to join Oriental College on the persuasion of Leitner. Saharanpuri imparted instruction in Arabic at oriental College for seventeen years and died in 1887. Kalanauri's association with Oriental College was forty four years long, from 1872 to 1916. Abdullah Tonkvi was another scholar of Arabic who served Oriental College for 34 years in various capacities.<sup>40</sup> Iqbal too worked at Oriental College after his appointment on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1899 as Mcleod Reader in Arabic. He worked there for almost four years.<sup>41</sup> Oriental College was undoubtedly a luminous feather in Anjuman's cap.

However, it is important to underscore that the Anjuman, despite its meritorious services for the people of Punjab, had an elitist character which was reflected in the fact that soon after its existence, it drew 300 members in its ranks.<sup>42</sup> All of them represented the top echelon of Punjabi populace. In

1870, Anjuman's sub-group numbered 37, and 'seventeen of them were listed in Griffen's *The Punjab Chiefs*.'<sup>43</sup> It also had resources to publish three newspapers and four journals.<sup>44</sup> Anjuman's popularity reached everywhere in the entire province. Soon it established its branches in Kasur, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Amritsar. The efforts of Anjuman bore numerous fruits and its significant ones are as follows:

- a) The University College, Lahore was established in 1869 which was elevated to a fully fledged University in 1882.
- b) The Board of Vernacular Instruction was set up.
- c) The Punjab Book Depot was also set up with the object of translating books from English and supervising their publication.<sup>45</sup>

The establishment of University College which later on evolved into a fully fledged University was the most conspicuous feat of Anjuman-i-Punjab. The demand for a University in the province had its genesis in a letter dated 10, June 1865, from Mcleod in which suggestions were invited for 'the improvement of Oriental learning and the development of a sound vernacular literature'.<sup>46</sup> Anjuman-i-Punjab enthusiastically responded to that call and proposed that an 'Oriental University' be set up at Lahore to notch up that goal. A number of Englishmen, organized through the 'European Committee of Support' also threw their lot behind Anjuman on the condition that it would adopt a more practical and useful proposal for establishment of 'an Anglo-Oriental institution' meant to impart European knowledge through the language of the people instead of the original plan of an Oriental University.<sup>47</sup> The Government of India too was not keen at setting up a University but acceded instead 'to the development of higher teaching in the Panjab by extending and improving the existing Government College, Lahore, with a grant-in-aid of Rs. 21,000.'<sup>48</sup> That move did not placate the Punjab Government and the Anjuman, the sponsors of the scheme. Long deliberations and bulky correspondence ensued till the Government of India eventually enunciated 'that institution be provided at Lahore, under some title as the "University College"'.<sup>49</sup> Thus the Punjab University College came into existence by Notification No.472 on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1869 with Leitner as its first principal.<sup>50</sup> It was however only a stepping stone for those in the vanguard of the movement and particularly Leitner, for a full fledged University. These endeavours seemed to have borne fruit when in 1877 Lord Lytton, on the occasion of the Imperial Darbar in Delhi, promised to introduce a Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council for endowing the Panjab University College with the status of a University, competent to confer degrees.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless it took at least another five years when Lord Ripon finally fulfilled the promise and on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1882 the University of the Punjab came into existence.<sup>52</sup> Mr. Baden Powell was appointed the first Honorary Vice-Chancellor and Leitner, the Registrar of the new University. Leitner retained that position till 1885.

The Punjab Book Depot became extremely important because it threw up a source of livelihood for some laureates of exceptional talent like Muhammad Hussain Azad and Altaf Hussain Hali. Consequently, both of them came to

Lahore. The journeys of these two to Lahore turned out to be watershed in the modern history of Urdu literature. Under the watchful eye of Colonel Holroyd, Urdu poetry was made to embrace new forms and themes, which were consistent with modernity. To carry out this transformation, a series of *Mushairas* were convened in 1874 under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Punjab.

### **Migrant Literati: Azad, Hali and *Mushairas***

Pritchett sees Anjuman's making an overriding contribution in enhancing Muhammad Hussain Azad's career. Azad with his chequered past and uncertain present and having wandered around for several years finally ended up in Lahore in 1864 at the age of thirty-four.<sup>53</sup> He was born in Delhi on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1830, to an enterprising father Maulvi Baqir Ali who pioneered Urdu journalism by bringing out the 'Delhi Urdu Akhbar' in 1836.<sup>54</sup> After early education, Azad went to Delhi College in 1846 and enrolled in the Urdu-medium 'Oriental' section, which offered Arabic and Persian rather than English. After completing Delhi College's eight year curriculum, Azad graduated, probably in 1854. Then he went on to join his father's paper and in the 1850s his name appeared as 'printer and publisher' of books produced by the Delhi Urdu Akhbar Press. He continued to work for his father's paper till 1857. Simultaneously he developed a taste for poetry and took Zauq, royal ustad who was a close friend of his father's as his *Ustad* (teacher) whom he greatly revered throughout his life. Aslam Furukhi, the acclaimed biographer of Azad, also speaks of his 'Zauq worship'.<sup>55</sup> That probably was also the reason why after Zauq's death he undertook a project of editing his *ghazals* for publication.

Life continued at a monotonous pace until the cataclysm of 1857 rocked Azad's life completely. His father was executed on the charge of treason, and his house and property confiscated.<sup>56</sup> During the next six or seven years he was on the run until he came to Lahore and managed to secure a temporary job at the Post Office. Later on, he got a petty job in the Education Department at the recommendation of Pandit Man Phul.<sup>57</sup> Pritchett reveals that Azad had been tutoring some Englishmen in Urdu to supplement his office salary, which must have been quite meagre. Fortuitously he had an opportunity of tutoring Leitner in 1864-65, who formed an excellent opinion about him.<sup>58</sup> Acquaintance with Leitner rewarded Azad in more than one way. He became a regularly paid lecturer on behalf of the Anjuman in 1866. During the next year (1867) Leitner made him secretary of the Anjuman.<sup>59</sup>

Azad worked assiduously hard for the promotion of Anjuman and the objectives it stood for. He read numerous papers at its meeting, which were generally speaking, well received. Anjuman published 142 papers out of which twenty-two were of Azad's. From March to December 1867, he produced 36 lectures and essays which encompassed all cultural and social issues that Indian society had to contend with. Besides, he also edited the Anjuman's journal. Those were the days when he wrote *Qisas-i-Hind*, a school textbook comprising stories from the Indian past.<sup>60</sup>

All his labour and loyalty eventually opened an avenue for further progress when, on the recommendation of Leitner, he was appointed as assistant professor of Arabic at Government College Lahore. From here on, according to Pritchett, the best period of Azad's life began. In 1870 he started editing Anjuman's newspaper 'Huma-i-Punjab'<sup>61</sup> which incurred the wrath of many, as they perceived it as 'being English-influenced to an unacceptable degree.'<sup>62</sup> However, the event that caused a lot of stir, took place on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1874 when according to Sadiq 'the Punjab Government made an abortive attempt to renovate poetry'.<sup>63</sup> The same year Sir Donald Mcleod, addressed a letter to Holroyd emphasising that the Text Book Committee of the Education Department, authorized to prescribe syllabi for higher and secondary schools, should include in its recommendations selection from Urdu poetry.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the stage for that event, which Pritchett called 'most memorable and controversial' was set with classy audience comprising mostly of Englishmen of high official rank.<sup>65</sup> On that occasion, Azad read his well-known manifesto in which he critically evaluated Urdu poetry in the light of the principles of English poetry that, according to Ghulam Hussain Zulfiqar, though lacked profundity it nevertheless served as the foundation stone for the Movement of Modern Urdu Poetry.<sup>66</sup> Shams ud Din Siddique describes that manifesto as the starting point of modern literary criticism.<sup>67</sup> While the 'traditional adornments of poetry' have fallen into 'desuetude', maintained Pritchett, he then goes on to quote by translating from Azad's own book 'Nazm-e Azad', 'New kinds of jewellery and robes of honour, suited to the conditions of the present day, are shut up in the storage-trunks of English-which are lying right here beside us.'<sup>68</sup> However, equally important but more widely quoted is the speech of Col. Holroyd in which he spoke at length about the decadent state of Urdu poetry and invited the attention of those present at the meeting 'to find ways and means for the development of Urdu poetry'.<sup>69</sup> He also read a letter from the Secretary, Punjab Government:

I have been directed to ask you if it is not possible to include in the curriculum of our secondary and high schools as a selection of Urdu poetry, aiming at moral instruction, and presenting a natural picture of feelings and thoughts. And, further, if a selection of this nature could be compiled from the works of Mir Taqi, Miskin, Zauq, Ghalib and others...If in this manner, with the help of schools, an indigenous poetry of a non-sectarian character were written and were gradually to replace the poetry now in vogue, it would really be an important step forward.<sup>70</sup>

In the same speech, he made an announcement of holding *mushairahs*, which would have a distinctive feature of assigning certain subject to the poet who was supposed to compose the poem. He also emphasized to the poets to write poems instead of ghazals in the rhyme of a given hemistich.<sup>71</sup> Col. Holroyd unfolded a plan of convening monthly meetings and then he announced a topic 'Bargha Rut'<sup>72</sup> (rainy season) for the poets to write on for the next meeting.

The poet, however, was at complete liberty to adopt any form whether *mathnavi* or *musaddas*. Before proceeding any further, it seems quite pertinent to throw some light on the origin of *Mushaira*.

Mushaira is a poetic symposium or a term used to describe an event where poets gather to recite their poetry. Mushaira is a modified form of the Arabic *musa'ara*, a verbal noun, which is reciprocal in reference<sup>73</sup> and according to Steingass its primary meaning is 'contending with, or excelling in poetry.'<sup>74</sup> In Persian *mushaira* denotes a poetic contest in which two persons or groups exchange couplets back and forth, each one is required to respond with a couplet beginning with the letter with which the opponent's couplet ends, usually known in South Asia as *bait bazi*. Mushaira refers exclusively to a gathering of poets for the purpose of poetry-recitation before the audience.<sup>75</sup> Shibli Numani in his monumental work *Si 'rul'ajam*, maintains that the Mushairas began in the Persian milieu by the end of fifteenth century.<sup>76</sup> Although information about the commencement of Urdu Mushairas is fragmentary it can be ascertained with some measure of certainty that these mushairas began in the second half of nineteenth century. Usually the homes of the individuals or *dargah* and *takiya* associated with *sufis* were the loci of such gatherings. Steadily but surely Mushairas gained popular currency in Delhi and Lucknow. Subsequently Mushaira tradition crept into Lahore's culture. But here we are primarily concerned about the Mushairas held under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Punjab and Muhammad Hussain Azad was the seminal figure and the guiding spirit behind that initiative.

Azad was quite prolific at Lahore. Although poetry prose was his *forte*, it was his ingenuity and finesse in the art of writing in which he excelled, as exhibited very succinctly in his works like *Sukhandan-e-Fars*, *Qisas-e-Hind* and *Ab-e-Hayat*. *Sukhandan-e-Fars*, which deals with Persian language and literature runs into two volumes, the first published in 1860s as a booklet and the second remained in manuscript form till 1907. After this both volumes were published together. The first volume consists of two lectures on the principles of philology with respect to Persian and Sanskrit and the second volume comprises eleven lectures, delivered in 1873. The latter is a mine of information on linguistics and although based mostly on Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia* (published in 1800) the whole account is embellished with beautiful prose which was Azad's peculiarity.<sup>77</sup> *Qisas-e-Hind* is a collection of stories from medieval Indian history, meant for children. The factual accuracy of these stories can be questioned but one tends to concur with Sadiq's view who terms it 'pseudo-historical' but great in terms of their 'vivid re-creation of the past' *Qisas-e-Hind* is undoubtedly 'a master-piece.'<sup>78</sup> *Ab-e-Hayat* (The Water of Life) is Azad's *magnum opus*.<sup>79</sup> He started writing *Ab-e-Hayat* in 1876 and it was finally published in 1880. Like *Sukhandan-e-Fars* it also runs into two volumes. The first volume focuses on the evolution and growth of Urdu language and the second one specifically deals with Urdu poetry.<sup>80</sup> In the particular field of Urdu Language and its development, Azad was the pioneer without any trace of doubt. Regarding his Urdu poetry in the second volume, he underscored the Persian influence on the development of Urdu language

and literature. The old *Tazkiras*, oral information obtained from friends and relatives and material secured through correspondence, are the sources on which Azad has based his narrative.<sup>81</sup> Besides these books Azad also wrote *Nairang-i-Khayal* and *Darbar-i-Akbari* which failed to make any impression. Generally Azad's prose is looked at suspiciously because the imagery, metaphor and simile have been used with some abundance. However, Sadiq commends Azad for adorning Urdu prose with the common/colloquial idiom of Delhi's *Shurafa* (genteel class).<sup>82</sup> Hence after Ghalib and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Azad contributed quite significantly in reorganizing Urdu prose towards modern lines. The locus of this unique development in Urdu prose was Lahore. He was conferred the title of *Shams ul Ulema* for his services in education and literature in 1887.<sup>83</sup>

Besides Azad, another poet laureate who, according to Sadiq, was 'temperamentally and intellectually the fittest person to herald the new movement'<sup>84</sup> was Altaf Hussain who composed poetry under the *nom de plume* of Hali (1837-1914).<sup>85</sup> Born to Khawja Izad Bakhsh in a middle-class Muslim family of Panipat,<sup>86</sup> he received early instruction at home, learnt Persian and Arabic besides learning Quran by heart at a very early age. His early education, as he described later, consisted of 'nothing more than a haphazard study of the most elementary Arabic and Persian texts which any Muslim child of the time was expected to read.'<sup>87</sup> The premature demise of his father in 1845 deprived him of paternal love and care.

As already noted, Hali had orthodox upbringing which naturally made him suspicious if not totally averse to 'anything western.' Therefore, when he came to Delhi in 1854 to pursue his studies, he preferred a traditional seminary *Madrissa-i-Hussain Bakhsh* in the vicinity of *Jamia Masjid*, over institution like the Delhi College.<sup>88</sup> It was in Delhi that Hali, primarily on the advice of Mirza Ghalib, turned to poetry. His stay at Delhi proved to be a temporary affair because he had to return to Panipat on the insistence of his family. However, he came to Delhi again in 1862 with the approval of his family. Shortly afterwards he became acquainted with Mustafa Khan Shaifta, Nawab of Jahangirabad in Bulandshehr district who wanted a tutor for his son. Hali went to Jahangirabad and worked as a tutor for Shaifta's son Naqshband Khan, for 7 years. Besides, he imbibed his patron's poetic vision and style. He attributed his success as a poet to Shaifta. In 1869, Shaifta passed away and Hali not only lost his benefactor but also his means of subsistence yet again. Hence, it was his quest for employment which led Hali to Lahore and he took up a job with Punjab Government Book Depot as Assistant Translator. His assignment was to go over the translated works from English and to edit them and check them for mistakes.<sup>89</sup> That was where Hali acquired 'a general feeling for English literature, and somehow or other my admiration for Eastern - and above all Persian literature - began gradually to diminish.'<sup>90</sup> In Lahore Hali met Azad for the first time. cursory acquaintance later on turned into closer intimacy. Eventually at the behest of Leitner and Azad, Hali also took part in *Mushairas*. During four years of his stay at Lahore, Hali participated in four *Mushairas* and recited his poems, which were in *masnavi* form. The themes of his poems

were *Barkha Rut* (The Rainy Season), *Nashat-i Ummid* (Pleasures of Hope), *Hubb-i Watan* (Patriotism) and *Munazara-i Rahm-o-Insaf* (Dialogue between Clemency and Justice).<sup>91</sup> Hali's poems were extolled and he was eulogized as 'the only glory of these gatherings.'<sup>92</sup> In one of the Mushairas, when he presented his poem on *hub-i watan* (patriotism), people in attendance listened to Hali 'all ears'. In these Mushairas, Hali seemed to have eclipsed Azad. The latter's poetry was found wanting and in need of *islah* or 'correction'.<sup>93</sup> Hali's stealing the limelight did not sit well with Azad, which resulted in some misgivings between the two. Mercifully, the relationship did not deteriorate to an extent of a complete alienation.

In 1875, Hali went back to Delhi partly because of his nostalgia for the city and partly because Lahore's climate did not suit his frail health. More importantly, however Anglo Arabic College's offer was the most effective persuasion for Hali to move to Delhi and he taught there for twelve years.<sup>94</sup> During that time he came into contact with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. Coupled with the influence that he imbibed from Lahore, Sir Syed's galvanizing effect brought the very best out of Hali in the form of *Musaddas-e Hali* in 1879. The poem called *Madd o jazr-e Islam* (The high tide and low tide of Islam) consists of 456 six line stanzas which were published first in *Tahzib ul-Akhlaq*, a journal that Sir Syed had instituted. In that poem Hali deplored the attenuating state of Indian Muslims in general.<sup>95</sup> Simplicity of style and refrain from excessive verbosity was also evident in the biographies, a genre that Hali pioneered. He started with *Hayat-i-Saadi*, (The Life of Saadi), a biographical account of the thirteenth century Persian poet published in 1886. Subsequently he wrote biographies of Ghalib (Yadgar-i-Ghalib, which Ralph Russell considers 'his best prose work')<sup>96</sup> in 1897 and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Hayat-i-Javed) in 1901. However, Hali broke new ground in Urdu literature by adding into its repertoire literary criticism by writing *Muqadma-i-Sher o Shairi* in 1893. That in fact was a long essay that he wrote as an introduction to his collection of poetry but subsequently it became a small book in its own right. It was not only the first attempt at literary criticism but according to Pritchett, 'by far the most influential work of Urdu literary criticism ever written'.<sup>97</sup> All said and done, the influence that Lahore cast on Hali played a decisive role in the way his poetry and prose subsequently shaped up.

He moved to Lahore once again in January 1887 as superintendent of the College Hostel. The people from College administration, as Malik Ram surmises, probably knew him from his previous stay in Lahore, therefore they extended him an offer, which 'bespeaks very highly of his character and integrity'.<sup>98</sup> Hali, unlike Azad did not find Lahore a convenient place to live indefinitely and resigned within six months in June 1887. The services that he rendered for education and literature were acknowledged when the title of *Shams ul Ulema* was conferred on him in 1904.<sup>99</sup> It may be appropriate to draw this section to a close by quoting the *Times of India* which noted in paying tribute to Holroyd, 'There is a pleasant flutter among the Urdu poets at Lahore, in consequence of the return of Major Holroyd, whose well-known Urdu scholarship and patronage of a pure Urdu poetry, induced him to revive,



if not to create, the “Mushairas” or gathering of poets which attracted considerable attention some time ago, and which we had much pleasure in chronicling.’<sup>100</sup>

### **Dawn of New Literary Era**

Despite the pecuniary incentive attached for the poets who distinguished themselves, the Mushairas could not go beyond March 1875. The nine Mushairas held in an ambiance reeking with acrimony, personal conflicts, rivalries and trenchant criticism of Azad’s role as the organiser as well as on the merit of his poetry. Thus the Mushairas evoked mixed responses. Sadiq pronounces the whole exercise of holding the Mushaira series an abject failure because ‘the academic verse it produced failed to touch the heart of the generation to which it was addressed.’<sup>101</sup> Leitner’s prognosis was slightly different, as poets had no choice but to accept ‘dictation in poetic inspiration’ which they refused to acquiesce in. Besides, poets also found it utterly disparaging when told that they had hitherto debased their genius by celebrating love. Therefore, Mushairas failed to produce the intended result. However, Furrukhi contests both of these assertions. He propounds that the ‘mushairah series ended not because it failed, but because it succeeded’ as the Department of Public Instruction thought the purpose of holding Mushaira was served and were optimistic of its lasting impact.<sup>102</sup>

Mushairas undoubtedly had a constant rub on the succeeding generations of poets. Therefore, Sadiq and Leitner’s respective pronouncements on Mushairas as failure, stand substantially invalidated as subsequent pattern of Urdu poetry betrays very strong influence regarding both its contents and forms. Generally the Persian sway on Urdu poetry waned quite considerably, giving way to the influence from the English literary tradition regarding its genre and poetic style.<sup>103</sup> The poem as a genre established its niche as a medium of poetic expression and particularly with Iqbal’s emergence; it ascended to come at par with the ghazal. Similarly, the Mushairas held at Lahore had a significant contribution in widening the scope of Urdu poetry, by introducing new themes, with Hali’s poem *Hubb-i Watan* as a case in point and which can be termed as the precursor of Iqbal’s *Tarana-i-Hindi*. Now, natural objects became the themes, which were broached very often by the poets, Iqbal’s *Himala*, *Pahar aur Gulehri* and *Aik Perinda aur Jugnu* etc can be put forward as illustrations. Literary journals like *Nairang-i-Khayal*, *Dilgudaz*, *Shor-i-Mehshar*, *Shabab-i-Urdu* and *Maghzan* had a profound resonance with the modern literary movement started at Lahore. Many poets namely Ismael, Benazir Shah, Na’azir, Sarwar, Mohsin, Mehroom, Chakabast, Auj, Shauq and Hadi came forward as the representatives of new poetry and published in newly established Urdu Journals.

### Conclusion

Soon after the 1857 Mutiny, when Delhi and Lucknow were subjected to British retribution, the cultural ethos that both cities once epitomized relocated itself to Lahore. Many officers of the Punjab Commission, justifiably the architects of the Province's administrative structure, had served for number of years in NWP. Most of them had some smattering of Urdu too. After coming over to Punjab, they replicated their experiences there. Not only in terms of the rules and regulations but also in language and culture, Punjab was thoroughly overhauled. The introduction of Urdu as a vernacular was one but a huge step in that particular direction. Donald Mcleod, Fuller and Holroyd zestfully worked towards re-inventing the literary character of Urdu in Lahore. Therefore Lahore was the locus of the inauguration of modern literary trend in Urdu from the 1870s onwards. The *Mushairas* held under the auspices of Anjuman-i-Punjab left an indelible mark on the future course that Urdu poetry and prose had taken. Hakim Ahmad Shuja mentions such informal institution like Hakim Shahbaz Din's *Baithak* where that tradition continued, started earlier by Azad and Hali. Government College and Oriental College are the most valued legacies of those days.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Bapsi Sidhwa, 'Introduction: City Beloved' in ed. Bapsi Sidhwa, *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Baqir, *Lahore: Past and Present* (Lahore: Punjab University Press, 1952), pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup>See for this William J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>Intizar Hussain, 'Ravians Recall the Good Old Days', May, 2002, [www.wokingmuslim.org/dr.leitner/link.htm](http://www.wokingmuslim.org/dr.leitner/link.htm). Accessed on 8th April, 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Tahir Kamran, 'Punjab, Punjabi and Urdu: A Question of Displaced Identity, A Historical Appraisal' in *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 14:1

<sup>6</sup>Chaudhary Nazir Ahmed, *Development of Urdu as Official Language in the Punjab (1849-1947)*, (Lahore: Government of the Punjab, 1977), p. iv.

<sup>7</sup>Tariq Rahman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.193.

<sup>8</sup>Chaudhary Nazir Ahmed, *Development of Urdu as Official Language in the Punjab*, p. iv.

<sup>9</sup>The first weekly newspaper appeared just after a few months of Punjab's annexation (January 14, 1850) by the name of *Koh-i-Noor*. Munshi Harsukh Rai was its founder. That newspaper was established under the patronage of the Punjab Board of Administration. Other newspapers were Punjab Journal, *Punjabee Akhbar* established in March 1856 by Syed Muhammad Azim, *Chashma-i-Khurshid*, a fortnightly paper founded by Munshi Diwan Chand

and *Mufad-i-Hind*. Muhammad Ismail Panipatti, 'Urdu ka Pehla Akhbar', *Imroze*, August 14, 1955, p.15. Also see Abdus Salam Khurshid, *Journalism in Pakistan, First Phase: 1845 to 1857* (Lahore: Publishers United Ltd, 1964), pp. 55-68.

<sup>10</sup>Y.B.Mathur, *British Administration of Punjab: 1849-1875* (Delhi: Surjeet Book Depot, n.d), p. 78.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, pp. 78-79.

<sup>12</sup>'Resolution of the Government of India, appointing the Indian Education Commission, No.1/60, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1882, printed as Appendix A to the Commission's Report, p. 623', cited in Syed Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India: 1781-1893* (Delhi: Idara-i-Adbiyat-i-Delli, 1981), p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>To see all the seven objects, *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup>Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education: The Politics of Schooling in the Colonial Punjab* (New Delhi: New Dawn Press Group, 2006), pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup>R.R. Sethi & J.L. Mehta, *A History of the Panjab University Chandigarh: 1947-1967* (Chandigarh: Panjab University Publication Bureau, 1968), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Irving, M. and Rhe-Philippe, G.W., *A list of inscriptions on Christian tombs and monuments in the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Kashmir and Afghanistan*, 2p.t. 190-12. The Indian Biographical Archive, microfiche, p. 26, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

<sup>18</sup>Irving, M. and Rhe-Philippe, G.W., *A list of inscriptions on Christian tombs and monuments in the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Kashmir and Afghanistan*, 2p.t. 1910-12. The Indian Biographical Archives, microfiche, p.141, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

<sup>19</sup>*The India list and India office list for 1900*. The Indian Biographical Archive, microfiche, p. 187, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

<sup>20</sup>Holroyd initially wanted, like his predecessor A.R. Fuller that English ought to be made popular and made it medium of instruction. However during 1870s English was deployed as a medium of instruction for mathematics and general knowledge in government district-level schools. Holroyd. 1871. Letter from Captain W.R.M. Holroyd, DPI, to the Officiating Secretary, Punjab No. 85, Lahore, 13 May 1871. In *Extracts from Punjab Records (Education): Home Department June 1871*. ACC No.799 (NDC).

<sup>21</sup>Intizar Hussain, 'Ravians Recall the Good Old Days', May, 2002, [www.wokingmuslim.org/dr.leitner/link.htm](http://www.wokingmuslim.org/dr.leitner/link.htm). Accessed on 8th April, 2012.

<sup>22</sup>Tariq Rahman, *Language, Ideology and Power: Language-Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 217.

<sup>23</sup>Leitner's description in Punjab University Lahore's website. His biographical details can also be seen in Allender, *Ruling through Education*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>24</sup>Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup>Emmett Davis, *Press and Politics in British Western Punjab: 1836-1947* (Delhi: Academic Publications, 1983), p. 52.

<sup>26</sup>H.L.C.Garrett and Abdul Hamid, *A History of Government College Lahore, 1864-1964* (Lahore: Government College Lahore, 1964), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Zarina Salamat, *The Punjab in 1920s: A Case study of Muslims* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1997), pp.11-12. Also see Hakim Ahmad Shuja, *Lahore ka Chelsea* (Lahore: Atishfishan, 2006), pp. 37-38.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup>In Syed Mahmood, *A History of English Education in India: 1781-1893*, p. 90.

<sup>30</sup>Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education*:p.137.

<sup>31</sup>Aslam Furrukhi, "Muhammad Hussain Azad" (Karachi: Anjuman-i-Taraqi-e Urdu, 1965), pp.164-190, cited in Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup>Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 315.

<sup>33</sup>It was established as an Oriental College, supported by voluntary contributions from Muslim gentlemen for the study of Persian and Arabic. But attenuating circumstances of its patrons, the College was closed down and reopened in 1825 under the Committee of Public Instruction and in 1829 it was endowed by a munificent bequest of Rs.1, 70,000 from Nawab I'tmad-ud-Daula, Prime Minister of the King of Oudh. *ibid*.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>35</sup>Qasis-i-Hind's second part was written by Muhammad Hussain Azad. See Muhammad Sadiq, 'Muhammad Hussain Azad' in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, Volume 4, 1857-1914 (Lahore: Punjab University, 2010), p. 122.

<sup>36</sup>Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 32-33.

<sup>37</sup>Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 319.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>39</sup>Shuja, *Lahore Ka Chelsea*, p. 23.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>41</sup>Iqbal used to teach History and Economics to Intermediate students. It was here that he authored *Ilm ul Iqtisad*. Javed Iqbal, *Zinda Rood: Allama Iqbal Ki Mukamal Swahneh Hayat* (Lahore: Sang e Meel Publications, 2004), p.112

<sup>42</sup>For the perspective on Anjuman-i-Punjab, see Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education*, pp. 123-157.

<sup>43</sup>Tim Allender, *Ruling through Education*, p. 161.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>45</sup>Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 319.

<sup>46</sup>Letter No. 296, dated June 10, 1865, from the Secretary, Panjab Government, to the Director of Public Instruction, Panjab, quoted in J.F. Bruce, *A History of the University of the Panjab* (Lahore: Government of the Panjab Press, 1933), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup>Sethi & Mehta, *A History of the Panjab University Chandigarh: 1947-1967*, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Panjab Government Proceedings, November 1868 (Education), p. 9, quoted in Bruce, *A History of the University of the Panjab, Lahore*, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Report of Anjuman-i-Panjab, Part IV, p.8, quoted in Sethi & Mehta, *A History of the Panjab University Chandigarh: 1947-1967*, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce, *A History of the University of the Panjab, Lahore*, p. 26.

<sup>51</sup> Sethi & Mehta, *A History of the Panjab University Chandigarh: 1947-1967*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> The Panjab University Act No. XIX of 1882 was published in the Gazette of India, dated December 7, 1882. Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, 'Muhammad Hussain Azad' in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> Aslam Farukhi, *Muhammad Hussain Azad, vol.1* (Karachi: Anjuman-i-Taraqi-i-Urdu, 1965) p. 93.

<sup>56</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 376.

<sup>57</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, Muhammad Hussain Azad in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>58</sup> Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*: p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> For Azad's life in Lahore see Hakim Ahmad Shuja, *Lahore ka Chelsea*, p. 38.

<sup>61</sup> Azad remained editor of that weekly publication till February 1871, when under the instructions from Leitner he handed over the charge to M. Muhammad Latif. See Malik Ram, *Hali: Makers of Indian Literature* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982), p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 33.

<sup>63</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 377.

<sup>64</sup> Malik Ram, *Hali: Makers of Indian Literature*, p. 20.

<sup>65</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Ghulam Hussain Zulfiqar, *Urdu Shairi Ka Siyasi aur Samaji Pas-i-Manzar* (Lahore: Sang e Meel Publications, 1998), p. 334.

<sup>67</sup> Shams ud Din Siddique, 'Adabi Manzar' in *Tareekh-i-Adbiyat-i-Muslamanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind: 1857-1914*, Volume IV, edited by Khawja Zakariya (Lahore: Punjab University, 2010), pp. 43.

<sup>68</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad, *Nazm-e Azad*, edited by Tabassum Kashmiri (Lahore: Maktabah 'Aliyah', 1978 [1899]), p. 46, cited by Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 34.

<sup>69</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 377.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Malik Ram, *Hali*, p. 21.

<sup>72</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 377.

<sup>73</sup> C. M. Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C.M. Naim* (Delhi: Permanent Black), p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (London, 1892).

<sup>75</sup> C. M. Naim, 'Poet-audience interaction at Urdu musha'iras' in *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in honour of Ralph Russell*, edited by Christopher Shackleton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), p. 167.

<sup>76</sup> Shibli Numani, *Si'rul'ajam*, vo. 111 (Azamgarh, 1945 reprint), p. 17, cited *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, 'Muhammad Hussain Azad' in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, p. 123.

<sup>78</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 379.

<sup>79</sup> Ralph Russell also considers Ab-e-Hayat as 'his best prose', see Ralph Russell, 'Changing Attitudes to Poetry: Azad and Hali' in *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*, edited by Ralph Russell (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), p. 122.

<sup>80</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, p. 382.

<sup>81</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, 'Muhammad Hussain Azad' in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, p. 129.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>83</sup> Shuja, *Lahore ka Chelsea*, p. 37.

<sup>84</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, 'Muhammad Hussain Azad' in *Tarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind*, p. 348.

<sup>85</sup> Also see Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, 'Maulana Hali' in *Naqoosh: Lahore*, edited by Muhammad Tufail, Lahore, no. 90 (October, 1961), pp. 1091-1092.

<sup>86</sup> Khawja Izad Baksh lived a modest life, 'earning a pittance hardly sufficient for himself and his family'. He was working on a minor job in the Permit Department of Provincial Government. See Malik Ram, *Hali*, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Altaf Hussain Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed*, translated by K.H. Qadiri & David J. Matthews (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1979), p. xi.

<sup>88</sup> Abdul Qayum, 'Altaf Hussain Hali', in *Tareekh-i-Adbiyat-i-Muslamanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind: 1857-1914*, Volume IV, edited by Khawja Zakariya, (Lahore: Punjab University, 2010), p. 75.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76. After retiring from Anglo-Arabic College Delhi, Hali was granted a pension for life by Sir Asman Jah, Chief Minister of Hyderabad state.

<sup>90</sup> Altaf Hussain Hali, *Kulliyat-e Nasr-e Hali*, Vol.1 (The complete prose writings of Hali). Edited by Shaikh Muhammad Ismail Panipati (Lahore, Majlis-i-Taraqi-i-Adab, 1968), p. 339, cited in Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 33.

<sup>91</sup> Abdul Qayum, 'Altaf Hussain Hali', in *Tareekh-i-Adbiyat-i-Muslamanan-i-Pakistan wa Hind: 1857-1914*, Volume IV, edited by Khawja Zakariya (Lahore: Punjab University, 2010), p. 76. Also see Qulfiqar, *Urdu Shairi Ka Siyasi was Samaji Pass-i-Manzar*, pp. 344-345.

<sup>92</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 37.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* also see Siddique, 'Adabi Manzar', pp. 42-43.

<sup>94</sup> Qayum, 'Altaf Hussain Hali', p. 76.

<sup>95</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 42.

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<sup>96</sup> Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), p. 126.

<sup>97</sup> Pritchetts, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> Malik Ram, *Hali*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>99</sup> Qayum, 'Altaf Hussain Hali', p. 76.

<sup>100</sup> The Times of India, November, 23, 1876.

<sup>101</sup> Muhammad Sadiq, *Muhammad Hussain Azad, His Life and Works* (Lahore: West-Pak Publishing Co., 1974), p. 39.

<sup>102</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, p. 38.

<sup>103</sup> Siddique, 'Adabi Manzar', p. 37.

## **Economic Change and Community Relations in Lahore before Partition**

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The city of Lahore had become one of the most important commercial and industrial centres in the Punjab by the end of British rule. Although Muslims constituted the majority of the population, it was, however, the Hindus and Sikhs who largely controlled economic activity in the city. Any territorial division of the province was likely to be grim not only for community relations but also for the city's continued prosperity. Based on archival material, this paper firstly, seeks to explain Lahore's colonial growth by demonstrating the ways in which the city's urbanisation was stimulated by the development of civil lines, cantonment areas and migration, along with the ways in which its strategic location, boosted by the development of railways, assisted in its rise. It then looks at the impact of these structural changes and urban developments on the experiences of people and practices of trade and employment. Secondly, it outlines the role Hindu and Sikh trading classes were playing in the city's socio-economic life on the eve of Partition. Finally, it assesses community relations in pre-1947 Lahore, assessing to what extent the strains of rapid urbanisation and improved means of communication impacted on religious harmony and how the growth of reformist and revivalist organisations sharpened religious identities.

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### **Lahore's Colonial Development**

Lahore's colonial urban development has been the focus of a number of recent studies.<sup>1</sup> These reveal both its unique features and also the ways in which it was typical of other cities and towns. It is important to understand the city's development in the wider context of the impact of the British rule in India. During the colonial period, some cities lost their importance, often their city status along with it, and others either came into being, or underwent considerable change.<sup>2</sup> In the Punjab, many modern towns and markets arose as a result of the opening up of land, which was tied in with the commercialisation of agricultural production. For example, the cities in the western part of Punjab - the so-called 'colony cities' or 'colony market towns' - were of this type.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, new garrisons and civil lines were built at a certain distance from the 'old city', or the 'walled city'. Thus within the limits of a single area, two cities would seemingly spring up - the old and the new.<sup>4</sup>

The processes of urbanisation restructured the city of Lahore's layout and appearance. Its urbanisation was stimulated by the development of civil lines, cantonment areas, railways and migration. In 1861 a modern Lahore 'Civil Station' for the small European population was built about a half mile to the



north-west of the old city. This was followed by a mixture of residential and commercial housing of the 'Civil Lines'. With the arrival of the Christian missionaries, educational institutions, medical missions, and churches were built along with a number of new public buildings of the district courts, treasury, jail, and police lines. Alongside these new developments, commercial establishments were also erected over time. Beyond the civil lines to the east, a large military cantonment, a zone of some 1,312 square miles, was built with modern sophistication. In the early 1880s, the railways in Lahore had acquired massive amounts of land along the Mughal Pura area, settling up the Naulakha area for the railway employees' colonies, including the posh Mayo Gardens. In 1892, over 4,000 men who found regular work in the Railway Workshops lived there.<sup>5</sup> Most of these employees had been drawn to the city in the hope of finding employment.

The opening of the King Edward Memorial Project in 1913 involved the construction of twelve imposing buildings, and the important new scheme for the Lahore Civil Secretariat, estimated to cost Rs 1,150,000, began a year later, aimed at collecting in one place the various public offices, accelerated these processes.<sup>6</sup> The establishment of new patterns of both administrative and residential zones resulted in the re-structuring of Lahore's spatial layout and design. The impact of city's construction on local trade and employment was considerable. The extended construction work created a high demand for labour and a large number of 'immigrants' poured into the city in search of work. This was especially important in increasing economic mobility, technical skills, and capital of the local artisan groups. Those who benefited most from these developments were the Muslim artisan castes of *Lohars* and *Tarkhans*, along with the Sikh *Ramgarhias*, who possessed similar metalworking and carpentry skills. A 1917 government survey of the urban wages of 'all classes of labour' in Lahore showed that the 'skilled workers' were receiving more than three times the wages they had been getting a decade earlier. The '*mistri*' classes were drawing 18 rupees monthly, while the average increase was over 23 percent in the period between 1912 and 1917, as the table below reveals. At the same, the price of commodities also trebled in that period.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Urban wage increase in the city of Lahore, from 1912 to 1917**

Class of Labourers	Percentage Increase
Workers in Iron and Hardware	+25
Workers in Brass, Copper, Base Metal	+25
Carpenters	+13
Masons and Builders	+25
Unskilled Labourers	+29
Average	+23.4

Lahore's rapid urbanisation was intrinsically linked with the strong European presence in the Cantonment areas, Civil Lines, New Mozang, and the

Naulakha area. In 1875, the European population in the city exceeded over 1,700. With the settlement of the European population, the urban population experienced enormous social and urban change. The upper classes, specifically upper caste Hindus and Sikhs of the inner city became the beneficiaries of the new amenities. Aided by their wealth and pattern of life similar to that of the Europeans, enabled them to move into the civil lines. By the 1901 census, the population of the civil lines had increased to 16,080.<sup>8</sup>

As the city grew, its economy grew too. The demands of Westerners and their styles of consumption led to a rapid growth in commodity trading and the opening up of new retail shops and grocery stores in the new urban environment. G. C. Walker, the author of *Gazetteer of the Lahore District 1893-4* trumpeted 'The city of Lahore is the first place of the province as an [sic] European trading and shopping centre. The Mall is lined with large European shops, some of which are local concerns and some branches of Calcutta and Bombay business houses'.<sup>9</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, the cantonments, civil lines and the areas of upper Mall Road had been electrified.

The growth of the city and the demographic developments wrought profound social and economic change among its groups. It was, however, the Hindu commercial castes who took the most advantage of the newly-created urban environment. Indeed they were the first to open new shops at the Mall. The departmental stores of Janki Das and Devi Chand were the most famous at the Mall Road. Chota Lall and Dina Nath in the Anarkali bazaar were the leading shawl merchants and general cloth dealers. In Anarkali, Narain Das Bhagwan Das ran the biggest pharmacy in the city. The famous Nagina Bakery at the corner of Anarkakli and Nila Gumbad attracted a number of customers from the upper class and the European population of the city. On the eve of Partition, members of the Hindu community had monopolised the retail sector businesses, owning more than five thousand wholesale shops and grocery stores in Lahore.<sup>10</sup>

Seen from this perspective, urbanisation not only benefited the artisan community and the Hindu trading class, but provided new opportunities for castes engaged in such activities as menial work, dairy-farming and market gardening. With the spread of Christian conversion, a substantial number of the lower caste population came to Lahore in search of work. By the turn of twentieth century, the newly-converted Christians numbered over 4,000 in the city.<sup>11</sup> Many obtained menial employment in the cantonments, missionary hospitals and educational institutions. They were employed at higher salary rates than they had ever been before. As good vegetable growers, the Arains, whose district-wide population was enumerated at just over 127,000 in 1901, were the main suppliers of vegetables and fruits to the urban community.<sup>12</sup> The presence of a large European population in the city had enhanced their business; for example, the consumption of potatoes grew considerably in the civil lines and cantonment areas.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the castes engaged in such activities as those of *pashmina* shawl, leather-working and paper-making suffered severely as their older occupations died out. The principal reason for

this was the new competition, modern means of production, and the opening of new European markets. However, with the growth of Lahore, income of the dairy-farming community of Gujjurs also increased considerably. In 1921, according to a survey, total consumption of milk in the city was 350 *maunds* (54,796 lbs) and over 90 percent of the demand was supplied by 505 Muslim Gujjurs, who lived within the 12 mile radius of the city.<sup>14</sup> The demand for their dairy products enabled them to move closer to the city. The *Sheikhs* also benefited from the new development in the city and they were comparatively better off economically. They, along with the Hindus, Parsis and Jains, opened grocery shops in the Anarkali bazaar and at the Mall; for example, the well-known Rahim Bux, Norr Hussain and Company were general dealers in the Anarkali bazaar, which chiefly fulfilled the consumption requirements of the European and upper-class population of the area. There were also Parsi shops at the Mall and Anarkali bazaar and whose owners were dealers in European stores, alcohol trade and general merchandise.

**Table 2: Size of small minorities in the city of Lahore**

Census	Jains	Parsis	Budhists	Jews
1891	330	132	n/a	n/a
1901	430	188	n/a	n/a
1911	404	198	126	13
1921	474	177	n/a	n/a

The end of the First World War further speeded up the urbanisation process. A number of returning Indian soldiers moved into the city because of its modern amenities and opportunities for education. The war-time boom in trade stimulated the process of urbanisation, as a large number of labouring classes had been drawn into the city in search of work. Rapid migration of labour to the city also resulted in the construction of slums around the eastern side of the old city beyond the railways and the Ravi Bridge to Nawakot. Moreover, the richer *zamindars*, who were becoming better educated, and the absentee landowners, also moved into the city. The population of Lahore was 176,854 in 1891, tenth largest city in population size in India, and climbed to 281,781 by 1921- ranking it fifth-place.<sup>15</sup>

It is however interesting to note that the number of Muslims during the decade 1911-1921 increased by almost 20,000, while number of non-Muslims rose to about 30,000. It was through migration, rather than natural increase, which largely contributed to the substantial population growth of Lahore. By the census of 1921, Muslims constituted just over 50 percent of the population of the city and this rose to 58 percent a decade later and to over 64 percent in 1941. The rapid increase in the number of Muslims in the later years of colonial rule was mainly due to the extension of the limits of the Lahore municipality. Between 1923 and 1939 administrative area of the city grew significantly, by over 300 percent, constituting about 12.1 percent of the total population of the city.<sup>16</sup> As much as 88 percent of this 'rural portion' added

population which consisted mainly of Muslims. This unequivocal majority was to play a decisive role in any contested claim over the city's fate at Partition, although the non-Muslims controlled the economy of the city.

**Table 3: Religious composition of population in the city of Lahore**

Census	Total	Hindus	Sikhs	Muslims	Christians	Jains	Parsis
1881	149,369	53,641	4,627	86,413	n/a	227	n/a
1891	176,854	62,077	7,303	102,800	4,697	339	122
1901	202,964	70,196	7,023	119,601	5,558	420	166
1911	228,714	77,267	12,877	129,301	8,463	467	196
1921	257,295	91,544	11,766	140,708	8,808	474	177
1931	429,747	129,125	23,477	249,315	16,875	791	300

**The contribution of Hindus and Sikhs in the commercial activity of Lahore**

The trade and commerce of the city was mainly in the hands of the non-Muslims. This is apparent from the figures in Table 4 below which show the differential payment of tax on the sale of goods and urban property.

**Table 4: Amounts (in rupees) of various taxes paid by Muslims and non-Muslims in city of Lahore, 1946-7**

Taxes	Non-Muslims	Muslims	Difference (%)
Sales Tax	519,303	66,323	88/12
Urban Property Tax	940,248	406,747	70/30
House Tax	699,383	435,530	60/40

There has been considerable research on the under-representation of Muslims in trade and industry in contrast to the Hindus' exploitation of new opportunities for economic advancement.<sup>17</sup> Lahore's Hindus dominated the retail and wholesale trades, and controlled the industrial sector. The industrial and commercial enterprise of this trading class had built up a large number of factories, workshops and commercial institutions involving larger capital in various areas. A 1943-4 survey of the *Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry* enumerated non-Muslim shops in the city at 5,332, compared with 3,501 owned by the Muslims.<sup>18</sup> Most of the shops in the Anarkali bazaar and at the Mall Road, as well as in older commercial areas in the inner city such as Delhi Gate, Akbari Mandi, Kishera bazaar, Chuna Mandi and Rang Mahal and around the Shah Almi gate were in non-Muslim hands. A similar pattern also existed in factory ownership in Lahore, as the survey of the *Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry* reveals. There were 218 registered factories in the city owned by 'Indians'; out of these as many as 173, or 80 percent, were owned by

non-Muslims. The total fixed and working capital invested in these factories amounted to Rs 60.05 million in the period 1943-4. The share of the non-Muslims in this total amounted to Rs 40.88 million - about 80 percent of the total investment.<sup>19</sup>

Most manufacturing involved the processing of agricultural products. There were cotton-ginning, rice-husking, and oil-milling factories and these were owned mainly by the Hindus and Sikhs. The most important were the Punjab Oil and Punjab Flour Mills, which were set up in 1881. Eight factories, dealing with cotton spinning and weaving, were working in the city. The most important included the Mela Ram Cotton Mill and the Punjab Textile Mill at the Ravi Road. The Mela Ram Cotton Mill was set up in 1898 and had its own ginning, spinning, weaving, bleaching as well as dyeing mechanism. The average monthly output during the war was about Rs 400,000 yards of cloth. The annual value of the sales of the mill during the war was about Rs 7,200,000 - two and half times more than the pre-war level. In 1946, the mill was equipped with 16,670 spindles and 150 looms and its ginning factory was fitted with 48 ginning machines. The total value of the mill was estimated Rs 900,000 in 1945-6.<sup>20</sup>

The data on the ownership of the banking sector illustrate a similar pattern, as the table 5 below shows. For example, out of 97 banking offices in the city, only seven were run by Muslims. Although these banking offices had a working capital of over 100 million of rupees but out of this total, the Muslim share was only about half a million of rupees. Some big banks had many branches in the city; for example the National Bank of Lahore had seven branches in the different areas of the city, and the Australasia Bank, Hindustan Commercial Bank and Commercial Bank of India had three branches each in the city. The Alliance Bank of Simla had opened two branches in the city, one in the civil lines and other in the cantonment. The Lahore Central Co-operative Bank Limited was at the forefront of providing loans to the industrial class of the city. The Lahore Mortgage Bank Limited considerably impacted the financing of business of traditional Hindu *Banias* in the city, as the bank offered discounted interest rates.

Similar patterns of ownership existed in other sectors. For example, out of the 80 insurance company offices in the city only two out of these were managed by Muslims. The most important included the Mahalaxmi Insurance Company and Sunlight Insurance.

**Table 5: Ownership pattern in corporation property in Lahore, 1946-47**

Corporation Property	Total	Non-Muslim Owned	Muslim Owned
Banks	97	90	7
Registered Factories	218	173	45
Insurance Companies	80	78	2
Shops	8,833	5,332	3,501

Though the modern banking system affected business of the money-lenders, it was, however, the Hindu commercial castes that largely owned and controlled most of the city's banking system and insurance companies; so the banking sector was badly hit when they migrated in 1947. The minorities' dominance in all commercial sectors was by no means unique to Lahore. Timor Kuran has adequately shown the 'underperformance of Muslims' in terms of trade and commerce in the cities of Istanbul, Cairo and Beirut, in comparison to local Christians and Jews.<sup>21</sup> The minority community's importance in the economic life of Lahore meant that the city's fate was contested in any division of the Punjab. In the presence of these large economic stacks, the representatives of Hindus and Sikhs pleaded to the commission of the Punjab Boundary Award to include Lahore within India. The claim on the territory was however decided on a majority number, rather communities' dominant role in the economy.

As statistics reveal, Muslims of Lahore, as elsewhere in the Punjab, were economically deprived and less wealthy than the Hindus and Sikhs who controlled the city's business life. Very few of the leading bankers, industrialists and traders were Muslim; they were mostly artisans, labourers, small traders in dairy products and vegetables, as well as weavers of shawl, craft and carpet industries. The Muslim upper-class families of Lahore comprised the Sayads, Qizilbash and Mian of Baghbanpura. Members of these groups advanced through education and government jobs. The Arians, Pathans, Gujjurs and Kashmiris however dominated the Muslim population, as is evidenced in Table 6. A large number of the latter migrated to the city in the period of 1878–79 when a severe famine in Kashmir forced them to leave for different towns and cities of the Punjab. Many were traditionally traders of shawls. The Pathans on the other hand would come to the city seasonally in search of work during the winter season, while others settled permanently, forming an important segment of the city's labour force. Many were petty traders and vendors of cloth business and dry fruits. The existing family networks of these groups stimulated a large partition-related refugee inflow in Lahore in 1947.

**Table 6: Size of Muslim Biraderis in Lahore**

Biradries	1901	1911	1921	1931
Arains	127,688	105,028	110,656	138,240
Kashmiris	16,198	14,897	14,222	26,092
Pathans	8,420	12,247	11,819	22,308
Gujjurs	8,246	8,027	8,638	10,086

Other important Muslim castes were the Lohars and Tarkhans, who were employed in the railways, construction and metal-works. In 1931, they made up a district-wide population of over 50,000. With the passage of time, they moulded their traditional skills and entered the newly-emerging foundry

industries. Pran Nevile, a former resident of Lahore's Nisbhet Road, comments as follows on the pre-partition city's socio-economic structure:

The Muslims constituted the majority of workers and artisans, being either employed in craft industries or in factories owned by Hindus. However, they controlled the fruit and vegetable markets, milk supply, furniture shops, tent manufacture and the tailoring business. There was also a sizeable Muslim landed aristocracy which owed its wealth and status to the British government.<sup>22</sup>

The Muslims of Lahore also fell behind Hindus in spheres other than commerce and industry. One was education. On the eve of Partition, of the fifty-six colleges and high schools in the city, only sixteen were run by the Muslim community. The Hindus of Lahore were well ahead in the overall percentage of the educated with 14 percent, while Sikhs at 5 percent and Muslims at only 3 percent. The backwardness of Muslims of Lahore can be seen further from the overall number of students during the academic session of 1946-7; for example out of the total candidates appearing in the various Punjab University examinations only 28.51 percent were identified as Muslims. The modern educational opportunities were monopolised by high-caste Hindus, and this is further evidenced from their share of students in Lahore's two distinguished institutions—Forman Christian Collage and Kinnaird Collage for Women as shown in Tables 7 and 7a below.

**Table 7: Community-wise student number in F. C. College, 1946-47<sup>23</sup>**

Hindus	Sikhs	Muslims	Christians	Parsis	Total
793	344	248	50	2	1437

**Table 7a: Community-wise student number in Kinnaird Collage, 1946-47<sup>24</sup>**

Hindus	Sikhs	Muslims	Christians	Parsis	Jains
120	40	40	30	2	1437

### **Community Relations in Lahore on the eve of Partition**

Much has been written on the extent to which the sharpened religious identities of the colonial era paved the way for 'communalism' and the violence of 1947.<sup>25</sup> Ian Talbot's early work on Lahore has shown that the driving motivations for the violence which engulfed the city in 1947 lies in persistent rival claims to sovereignty, territory and power in advance of constitutional decision making.<sup>26</sup> Source material presented in the following section reveals that for the majority of the people of Lahore, until the later stages of colonial rule, nationalist contention in the public arena did not translate into hostile interpersonal relations, and in many ways competing religious affiliations and

identities remained variegated and undifferentiated. Indeed the British rule intensified competitive religious revivalism and the last quarter of the nineteenth century had witnessed a gradual worsening of relations among the different religious communities in the city, as elsewhere in the region. Official enumerations not only played a crucial role in the 'essentialisation' of religious and caste identity, but also opened up a space for communities and social groups to redefine themselves.<sup>27</sup> The challenge to indigenous faiths posed by colonialism and missionary activity from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards provoked the formation of a multitude of religious reform movements in North India. Rapid growth in the number of native Christian converts became one of the major motivating forces for religious and sectarian revivalism in Lahore. Throughout the Punjab number of native Christian converts rose from 3,912 in 1881 to over 19,000 a decade later, and by 1901 had reached nearly 38,000. In the city of Lahore, the number had increased to over 4,000, according to the 1901 census, and climbed further to 16,500 by the next two decades (see Table 8).<sup>28</sup> The rapid growth in converts and the missionaries' close ties with the government alarmed indigenous reformers and created a deep fear of the 'Christian threat' among many Indian religious leaders. 'The persistent and organized aggressiveness of Christian missionary effort has also forced the Hindu...', John Oman wrote in 1908, 'to reconsider the foundations of their faith, while creating a strong feelings of opposition to their well-meant efforts at evangelization'.<sup>29</sup>

**Table 8: Christian population in the city of Lahore**

Census	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1947
Christians	4,697	5,558	8,463	8,808	16,875	30,000

Writers such as Harjot Oberoi have argued that the activities of nineteenth century religious reformers crystallised existing blurred religious identities in the colonial Punjab.<sup>30</sup> Ayesha Jalal characterises Punjab as the centre from which Muslim separatist and Hindu nationalist discourses radiated to the rest of North India.<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly, this was a period of growing communalism in Lahore as elsewhere in the region. Because of the strong presence of Christian missions, sectarian educational institutions and printing presses, the urban area became an important centre for these burgeoning organizations. In Lahore, by the turn of the twentieth century, more than a dozen different social and religious societies were at work.<sup>32</sup> The growing organisational strength of, and rivalry among the groups, reinforced existing communal divisions. This process of reinterpreting the past and presenting a new vision of the future permanently changed relations among the communities who had been living side by side for generations with some degree of harmony.

The most influential reformist movement was the Hindu Arya Samaj.<sup>33</sup> John Oman has particularly highlighted the contribution of Pandit Lekh Ram - a diehard preacher of the organization - to communalisation in Lahore.<sup>34</sup> Pandit Lekh Ram was murdered on 9 November 1897, by a young Muslim,



because of his repeated 'violent speeches and writings against Islam'. The murder of Pandit Lekh Ram created 'a great sensation' in Lahore. The funeral procession of Pandit Lekh Ram was attended by 8,000 people, before parading on the streets of Lahore, and chanting slogans against the Muslims and outcry about Hindu 'religion in danger'. 'As a matter of course', John Oman concluded, 'the relations between the Mussulmans and Hindus... became greatly strained'.<sup>35</sup> Members of the Arya Samaj planned revenge. This time, they chose the city of Rawalpindi where a Hindu, dressed as a Muslim, presented poisoned sweetmeats to a number of Muslims after a prayer in the Mosque, and as a result fourteen were taken ill and two died.

Little, if anything, has been written on the role played by Lahore's First Hindu Conference, held on 21-22 October 1909, to influence communalisation in the city. In addition to Lahore's Hindus, over 800 delegates from all over Punjab came to the city to attend the event. Among many prominent leaders, Lala Lajpat Rai was a participant. Pressing the need for Hindu unity, his speech on 21 October threw light on the Muslim-Hindu relations. 'The relations between the two communities are more strained today than they were in 1880 or before, while the Muhammdans have gained in unity and solidarity by uniting their brethren and making a serious effort to close up the ranks. The Hindus have lost ground in every direction'.<sup>36</sup> A number of local speakers highlighted the impending 'fear of Muslim domination' in the municipal committee elections due to the growing rise in Muslim population of Lahore and elsewhere in the Punjab.<sup>37</sup> At the end of the event, a resolution was passed against a 'separate electorate' in order to present it to the Viceroy Lord Minto. The event was well-publicised in Lahore's Hindu press.

Lahore was the hub for the printing industry. In 1896, there were 17 printing presses in the city and by the next two decades they rose to 75. They were evenly owned by the rival communities.<sup>38</sup> Local printing presses magnified the mushrooming religious antagonism and played a role in the polarisation of attitudes. At Partition, the city alone published 32 English and over 100 vernacular periodicals. In the midst of hostility and a claim for the territory in the later months of colonial rule, the sectarian press not only presented a partial historical record and published unsubstantiated stories, but also became active in highlighting tensions and provoking riots.

While the modern means of communication provided the circumstances for the rise of communalism, and religious revivalism tightened communal identities, beneath the surface there were clear demarcations among the religious communities' everyday interactions. In particular, troubles concerning the sharing of cooked food created barriers in everyday life. There was segregated accommodation for students and separate cooking and dining facilities for the Hindu and Muslim boarders, based on religion, in majority of the city's educational institutions, including the F.C. Collage and Government College Lahore.<sup>39</sup> Satish Gujral, who was a Hindu student at the Mayo School of Arts, writes his memoir of Lahore.

Even in the Mayo School hostel which never had more than a score of residents, Hindus and Muslims sections were clearly

demarcated...though we met on the playing ground fields, sat side by side in the classrooms and occasionally went to each other's room, we were housed in different wings of the hostel buildings and had separate kitchens and dining rooms.<sup>40</sup>

The concentration of different religious communities in the city of Lahore, in many ways, if not all, contained elements of a segmented, precarious and plural society - theorised by Leo Kuper - which was likely to explode into 'genocidal violence' during a crisis.<sup>41</sup> Pre-colonial Lahore was a walled city with its twelve gates and narrow streets and alleys lined with residential and commercial buildings. The Hindu, Sikh and Muslim communities lived separately but very close to each other - in mixed but not intermixed localities. The poor and artisans Hindu population lived in the walled city, and the Shah Almi area, Chuna Mandi, Akbari Mandi, Wachowali and Rang Mahal and Delhi gate were the leading Hindu residential and commercial centre. The Muslim artisans lived predominately in the Mochi gate and Bhatti gate areas. Outside the inner city, Muslims predominately lived in Islamia Park, Shadi Park, Wasanpura, Ahmedpura and Misri Shah. Even in some mix localities such as Mozang, Ichhra and Baghbanpura there were separated streets and quarters of Muslims and non-Muslims. Table 9 below illustrates the religious composition of Ichhra and Baghbanpura localities.

**Table 9: Religious composition in the localities of Ichhra and Baghbanpura in 1931**<sup>42</sup>

**Ichhra:**

Total	Hindus	Sikhs	Muslims	Christians
5,048	680	198	4,000	170

**Baghban Pura:**

Total	Hindus	Sikhs	Muslims	Christians
12,805	1,171	476	11,881	277

Alongside the migration to Lahore, there were also population shifts within the city. The first to move beyond the walled city were the wealthy Hindus. They moved out to the middle-class suburbs of Krishan Nagar, Nisbbet Road, Sant Nagar and Singhpura and upper class Model Town. Hindus owned two-thirds of the houses in the latter locality. Seen from this perspective, by the end of colonial rule, the city had divided into three parts socially, economically as well as in its structural and spatial layout.

As elsewhere in the region, Lahore had a protracted history of 'traditional' religious conflicts.<sup>43</sup> They were however not insurmountable and did not culminate in an outburst of ferocity until the closing months of the colonial rule. Moreover, they did not overwhelm the common caste, *biraderi*, or

regional sources of identity. The Punjabi identity remained more important than that derived from religion, and in the cultural binding, the Punjabi language played a key role. Within various religious communities, there were a variety of beliefs and practices, as well as castes and *biraderis*. At the same time, there was a well-established tradition of community interaction and this co-existence, with some degree of harmony, continued to exist until the late colonial era. There were a number of examples of a diverse set of community relationships. In 1927, Sardar Jogindra Singh, then the Minister for Agriculture and Industries, explained to the Lahore journalists, after a tour of the riot-effected neighborhood of the walled city:

There was amply of evidence that the ordinary men of various communities assisted each other, in spite of the prevailing ill-will. It is difficult to recall even from the worst days of chronic disorder many recorded incidents comparable to stabbing or clubbing by stealth. Men fought during the day and met together in the evening to partake of a friendly meal.<sup>44</sup>

The community's everyday mutual dependencies and interactions continued throughout the late colonial period. The religious communities relied on each other for everyday prosperity and livelihood. In one instance, the Hindu businessman, Rai Bahadur Mela Ram's Ravi Road Mela Ram Cotton Mills employed half of its workforce from the Muslim community. Moreover, inter-community support existed as well. Time to time, the privileged Hindus contributed to Muslim welfare. The business empire of Rai Bahadur Mela Ram was at the forefront of such assistance in the city of Lahore. A prime example was the payment for the electrification of Data Ganj Bakhsh Burbar. His son, Ram Saran Das, provided financial help to a number of Urdu literary journals owned by Muslims.<sup>45</sup> The Dayal Singh Trust and the Ganga Ram Trust greatly contributed to the welfare of Lahoris regardless of their religious affiliations. People from all faiths would participate in seasonal festivals. The communities also took part in each other's religious festivals despite the fact they would sometime trigger clashes.<sup>46</sup> The Bhadar Kali fair at Niazbeg and the Charaghan ka Mela at the Shalamar Gardens drew devotees from all the communities. Lahore's coffee and tea houses were the popular meeting coterie for 'social interaction and intellectual gossip' for the literati of all communities, to include the members of the Progressive Writers Association and the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society.<sup>47</sup> In other examples, Government College's cricket team represented all the religious communities, and in May 1946, a team of Lahore cricketers, under the captaincy of A. R. Cornelius, visited the city of Amritsar and played against the Amritsar Cricket Club.<sup>48</sup> In other sets of community relationships, F.C. College's annual Christmas dinner, which was held in the assembly hall on 21 December 1946, was attended by 165 people including the students and their parents from all communities.<sup>49</sup>

Drawing on first-hand accounts of some former residents of Lahore, the early work of Ian Talbot and Ishtiaq Ahmed has highlighted the diverse and complex sets of community relations and concluded that the despite

politicisation of religious identities, a social order had survived until the later stages of colonial rule.<sup>50</sup> Saad Ashraf's account *The Postal Clerk* tellingly provides the ethnic plurality of colonial Lahore's communities that knit the harmonious and multi-cultural social fabric of the city.<sup>51</sup> Crime reports and proceedings of the local courts provide further evidence on accommodative relations among the religious communities at the neighbourhood level before the conflict started in 1947. For example, Mozang Thana crime reports from 1946 onwards list the following string of patterns of inter-community relations: six Muslims of the *mohalla* of Tajpura gave evidence to the local court in the favour of a Hindu shopkeeper whose jewellery shops were burgled by two Muslim criminals; a Ramgarhia Sikh appeared as an eye-witness in favour of a young Muslim who was allegedly arrested for stealing a Japanese bicycle in the locality of Rajgarh. In other cases, when Gopal's furniture warehouse at the Bidon Road was burned down on the evening of 4 December 1946, a neighbouring Muslim proprietor provided evidence to the Sunlight Insurance Company for compensation of damages.<sup>52</sup>

Given this complex scenario, Partition violence was by no means an inevitable outcome at the end of the colonial rule. Until the later stages of colonial rule, community relations were harmonious and neighbourly, and political power, though it was mainly based on community lines, was structured by 'consociationalism'.<sup>53</sup> It was not until the 1940s, the polarisation of attitudes was tightened on communal lines. In actuality, until the late 1930s, the leading communal political parties such as the Muslim League were marginalised in Lahore, as elsewhere in the Punjab. Their absence is evidenced from a letter of the Governor of Punjab, Herbert Emerson, to the Viceroy in 1936, in which four major parties of the province were listed, absenting both the Muslim League and Congress.<sup>54</sup> The correspondence indeed included the *Majlis-i-Ahrar*, while this group, opposed to the ruling Unionist Party, had little provincial political representation. The Ahrar leadership believed in agitational politics and in keeping the masses occupied with one issue after the other to keep the momentum high. They also concentrated their energy on declaring the Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyya as non-Muslims, as well as taking a radical stand on the issue of Muslim interests in Kashmir. Ahrar's skilful use of religion and publicity on various communal issues not only helped to swell its membership, but the group's growing political activism also resulted in a victory in a by-election for the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937.

Little, if anything, has been written on the contribution of *Ittehad-i-Millat* to communalisation in Lahore. The group's membership climbed during the *Shaheed Ganj* agitation when its founder Pir Jamiat Ali Shah launched a campaign of 'Buy Muslim product' movement in Lahore in September 1935, urging the Muslims to boycott the non-Muslim products. He particularly called upon the youth to implement the boycott movement 'by force' and to be armed with swords when out of doors.<sup>55</sup> This charged the communal situation in the city as members of the Hindu community retaliated by initialing 'Buy Hindu movement'. A description of the growing tensions appeared in a local

newspaper that also pointed towards the communities' everyday inter-dependencies:

The atmosphere at Lahore is charged with communal tension. The mutual boycott movements are gaining force. Muslim youths are moving about in the bazaars and preventing their co-religionists from making purchase from Hindus, while Hindu youths are distributing small pamphlets containing the words 'Reply to Pir Jamaatali Shah by a responsive boycott in a more effective manner'... 'Buy Hindu' movement has proved more troublesome for the Hindus than the 'Buy Muslim' movement for the latter because the Muslims hold the monopoly of fruit and vegetables, while the articles sold by Hindus can be purchased from some Muslims as well.<sup>56</sup>

There was a sharp discord between the Majlis-i-Ahrar, Tahrik-i-Khaksar and Ittehad-i-Millat. The former opposed the boycott movement and pleaded that the Hindus of Lahore had nothing to do with the Shaheed Ganj Mosque and the Muslims of Lahore would be hit more than the Hindus. These Muslim groups chiefly drew their strength from the 'urban *kami* castes'. They, throughout the thirties, not only competed with each other, but also with the Muslim League, Unionists, Akali Dal and Singh Sabha. Tensions between them became acute in Lahore. Though there were growing political tensions in Lahore in that period and the strength of religio-political movements had increased considerably, the Unionist Coalition Government by some means managed to reconcile the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims until the turn of 1947. By the beginning of the 1940s, religion had become a major focus of religious identities and political mobilisations because of the growing emergence of communal political parties, along with advances in the means of communication. The growing tension that had accompanied the previous year's provincial elections, 1945-46 and the collapse of negotiations that ensued created insecurity and fears about political and social stability, was a 'precipitating point' for ensuing violence in Lahore. Second only to this was the resignation of the Unionist Government of Khizr Hayat Tiwana on 2 March 1947. The collapse of the Khizr Government not only triggered fierce competition for power and the uncertainties over minority status, but enraged the Sikh Akali Dal as it not only brought the prospect of Pakistan nearer, but seemed to open the way for a Muslim League government in the Punjab. For the minorities of the city, security became the paramount need of the hour in the heightened communal situation. Alongside this, the continued decay of the colonial state and fallouts from the unresolved political problems were a precondition for the 1947 violence in Lahore.

From March 1947 onwards not only did the polarisation of ethnic relations widened, but the pattern of riots also changed considerably from the previous random eruption of spontaneous and traditional disturbances, which we now may term 'ethnic cleansing' of a locality, or rival community.<sup>57</sup> The motives for violence were manifolds: to prove assertiveness of residency of the

majority for the contested claims over political sovereignty, to appropriate localised economic motivations, to terrorise and intimidate rival minority to vacate Lahore – the region's most prosperous but now a contested city - in advance of the actual Partition. Leaflets warning Hindus and Sikhs to leave or face the consequences began to surface in the walled city. The emphasis in the inner city was on 'an entirely new campaign of incendiarism'. According to crime reports, in the second week of May, over 53 cases of arson were recorded in the city and by the end of the month they had went up to 250.<sup>58</sup> Lahore correspondent of the *Times* (London) rightly reported in May that 'the cases of arson were the biggest in the first time in the history of Lahore'.<sup>59</sup> The scale and intensity of arson in Lahore according to Governor Jenkins, 'resembled those in London during the fire blitz'.<sup>60</sup>

The patterns of violence in 1947 were as differentiated as was Lahore's distinct characteristics of neighbourhoods, as the non-Muslim community itself comprised of poor, professional, and businessmen. In actuality, the poor communities of the city suffered much greater than the upper class non-Muslims in such localities as Model Town. An intelligence report noted that '70 percent of the new fires in Lahore at any rate occurred in non-Muslim houses' in the walled city.<sup>61</sup> By the end of May, over 40,000 ordinary people had abandoned the city because of the burning of their houses.<sup>62</sup> This tide of violence expedited the anticipatory migration of wealthy and politically astute Hindus and Sikhs out of Lahore. In the midst of chaos, the selling of properties, shifting assets and the 'flight of capital' out of the city climbed up. 'Migration from Lahore has been large, and Lahore's non-Muslims have been transferring their bank balances outside the Punjab...', noted an intelligence police report in early July. It further noted 'Withdrawals from local banks and Post Offices, however, have been unusually large'.<sup>63</sup>

Preparations for violence were made to pre-empt the boundary award, ranging from stocking of ammunitions to the recruitment of ex-soldiers in the ranks of the parties and bands. On the eve of Partition, most of the properties and businesses of Lahore's Hindus and Sikhs had been seized, looted, or destroyed. The city's predominantly Muslim police 'actually joined hands with the [Muslim] rioters, and there were mounting evidences that local Muslim leaders were trying to 'persuade the Muslim soldiers to follow the bad example of the Police'. The detachments of the army units of the Dogra, Baluch and Punjab had already been deployed in the troubled vicinities of the city. Field Marshal Sir Auchinleck in his memorandum to a meeting of the Joint Defence Council predicted a 'complete holocaust in the City', in the presence of communalised army.<sup>64</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper has shown the colonial urban growth immensely changed Lahore's social and economic landscape. By the end of British rule, the city had become the story of three cities - the old city - middle class suburbs - upper class model town establishments - that differed in their architecture, social composition,

lifestyle of their residents and economic activities. With improved means of communications, which linked local agricultural and industrial production with the regional, national, and even international markets, the city served as a hub of flourishing commercial activity. Moreover, the processes of urbanisation not only restructured the city's layout, but wrought profound social and economic changes among groups. Once the large military and European population settled, retail activities were boosted, as were commercial activities associated with local dairying and market gardening. Labour needs, arising from railway and colonial building projects, encouraged migration from the surrounding areas. The artisan communities improved their position through the development of the city and the increased demand for their skills and products. The Hindu trading and professional castes mainly benefited from the new urban opportunities offered by the civil lines and model town establishments as well as by modern education facilities. The Muslims mainly formed the artisan class, while trade and industry were the preserve of the Hindu commercial castes. However, the way the city developed it greatly affected the dynamic of interrelations between caste and class and profoundly changed the social context and communal identity.

As the paper has revealed, colonial rule not only brought increased material progress, but heightened awareness of communal identities. Censuses and representative governments not only defined boundaries more clearly, but more importantly facilitated a transformation in which communities came to be centrally concerned with numerical strength to exclusive 'rights'. Alongside the increasing awareness of elites, the rapid urban development and modern means of communication played a role in the polarisation of attitudes. Various socio-religious organisations tightened religious identities by competing not only with missionaries, but also with each other in the race to popularise their views and win influence. Religious revivalism resulted in deterioration in existing interrelations, and they were further eroded by the political mobilisations in the later stages of British rule. The paper has also explained that despite the seemingly harmonious relations between religious communities, a dividing line was just below the surface. However, the rise of communalism did not lie in Hindu-Sikh-Muslim antagonisms alone. While the 'primordial' account sounds plausible, and it is true that reformist groups tightened identities and political elites amplified 'latent nationalism' and manipulated ethnic fears, this view, as the paper has argued, omits the fact that 'deep-seated hatreds' can be made to subside through good statecraft. In the case of Lahore and elsewhere in the Punjab, the Unionists had somehow managed to reconcile the opposing communities until the turn of 1947.

The collapse of the Unionist Government triggered a fierce competition for power and political sovereignty and generated the uncertainties over the city's future and minority status. The failure of the outgoing colonial state to protect the minorities in the process of transition of power not only created a security-dilemma for the minorities and accelerated the pre-empt collection of arms in preparation for conflict, but also expedited the anticipatory migration of wealthy non-Muslims, together with moving capital out of the city. It was

however the poor sections of Hindu and Sikh communities who mainly bore the brunt of the 1947 upheaval. The large-scale violence and the mass migration which accompanied it was, by no means, inevitable at the end of British rule, but was contingent on political circumstances. The violence in Lahore might be seen in that light.

[**Acknowledgements:** I am grateful to Bapsi Sidhwa and Ian Talbot for their valuable comments and suggestions.]

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> W.J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011); A. Suvorova, *Lahore: Topophilia of Space and Place* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010); M.A. Qadeer, *Lahore: Urban Development in the Third World* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1983); I. Talbot, *Divided Cities: Partition and Its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006); G. Shahazad, *Lahore: Ghar, Galia and Darwazay (Lahore: Houses, Streets and Doors)* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 2007); M. Mushtaq, 'Lahore: Major Urban Regions', *Pakistan Geographical Review*, 22, 1 (1967), pp. 24-41.

<sup>2</sup> C.A. Bayly, 'Town Building in North India, 1790-1830', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9, 4 (1975), pp.483-504.

<sup>3</sup> For example, they include the towns of Lyallpur (present-day Faisalabad), Montgomery (present-day Sahiwal), and Sargodha in the canal-colony development scheme. For the development of canal colony towns, see D. Gilmartin, 'Migration and Modernity: The State, the Punjab Village, and the Settling of the Canal Colonies', in I. Talbot and S. Thandi, *People on the Move*, pp.1-30; I. Ali, *The Punjab under Imperialism*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988); T. Mahmood, *Socio-economic Transformation and Political Control in Colonial Punjab: A Case Study of the Shahpur District 1885 - 1922* (unpublished PhD thesis, Coventry University, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> S. Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); S. Chattopadhyay, 'Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of 'White Town' in Colonial Calcutta', *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians*, 59, 2 (2000), pp.154-179; A.D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge, reprint edition 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Government of Punjab, *Gazetteer of the Lahore District*, 1916, p.245.

<sup>6</sup> Government of Punjab, 'King Edward Memorial Project', Public Work Department Proceedings, File no. H 233 (J), (1916), PSA. The project was an extension of the Mayo Hospital and Albert Victor Group of buildings, and the erection of a new Medical College with nurses' home and a student's hostel to accommodate over 200 students.

<sup>7</sup> 'Monthly survey of economic conditions in the Punjab', Board of Economic Inquiry Punjab, Rural Section Publication no. 2, Lahore (1924), p.33.



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<sup>8</sup> Lahore District, Statistical Tables, File no. K21 (R) XV, (1936).

<sup>9</sup> Government of Punjab, Gazetteer of the Lahore District, 1893-4, p.160.

<sup>10</sup> Board of Economic Inquiry, West Punjab, Lahore, (1947), vol. III, no. 11, p.6.

<sup>11</sup> Lahore District, Statistical Tables, File no. K21 (R) XV, (1936).

<sup>12</sup> The majority of them were tenants with occupation rights. Many migrated to the canal colonies, receiving land in the Chenab Colony. See for example, Dobson, *Final Report on the Chenab Colony Settlement 1915*, p.39.

<sup>13</sup> Lahore's Baghbanpura Mian Arain family comprised the Muslim elite of the city. The most famous family representatives included Mian Shah Din, Mian Muhammad Shafi, Mian Iftikharuddin Ahmed and Begum Shah Nawaz. Ali Asghar Chaudri, *Tarikh-i-Araian (History of Araian)* (Lahore: Ilmi Kitabkhana, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> 'A Paper on the Milk Supply of Lahore', Board of Economic Inquiry, Punjab, Rural Section Publication no. 2, (1924). pp.7-8, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Lahore District, Statistical Tables, File no. K21 (R) XV, (1936).

<sup>16</sup> In 1923, the limits of the city were extended by the addition of some 'rural portion' into the 'urban area', which had a preponderating number of Muslims. In 1939, the municipal limits were further extended when several villages around Lahore within a radius of nine miles were included within the municipal boundaries by the Unionist Government. The area of city which consisted of 3,928 square miles- including an area of 1,334 square miles of the cantonment- was thus extended to over 12,875 squares miles. According to a 1939 survey of the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry, the extended limits of the city included a large population of 'purely agricultural *abadis* with no urban amenities'. See for details, 'The extension of the limits of municipal', Lahore Municipal Committee Records, File no. 2/244, 1939.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, T. Kuran and A. Singh, '*Economic Modernization in Late British India: Hindu- Muslims Differences*', ERID working paper no. 92, (2011), pp.1-41; N. Talha, *Economic Factors in the Making of Pakistan, 1921-47* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry 1943-4, pp. 23-4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> A. Anwar, *Effects of Partition on Industries in the Border Districts of Lahore and Sialkot* (Lahore: Board of Economic Inquiry, Ripon Printing Press, 1953), pp.19-20.

<sup>21</sup> T. Kuran, 'The Economic Ascent of the Middle East's' Religious Minorities: The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism', *Journal of Legal Studies*, 33 (2004), pp. 475-515. In another work, Kuran explains many similarities the Hindus' economic dominance in the colonial India with the Middle Eastern Christians and Jews. See for example, T. Kuran and A. Singh, '*Economic Modernization in Late British India*'.

<sup>22</sup> P. Nevile, *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> PHSA, 'Journal of Forman Christian College Lahore, 1946-47', RG, 415.

<sup>24</sup> PHSA, 'Haladia Porter, Principal of Kinnaird College, Lahore', RG 415, (March 1947).

<sup>25</sup> There has been a lively debate on 'Communalism' as to whether it emerged with British rule, or possessed a pre-colonial history. C.A. Bayly, 'The Pre-history of 'Communalism'? Religious Conflict in India, 1700-1860', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 2 (1985), pp.177-203; G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); S. Freitag, *Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); M. Hasan, 'The Myth of Unity: Colonial and National Narratives', in D. Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), pp.185-209; B. Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> I. Talbot, 'Pakistan and Sikh nationalism: State policy and private perceptions', *Sikh Formations*, 6, 1 (2010), pp. 63-76; also see Talbot, *Divided Cities*.

<sup>27</sup> I. Hacking, 'Making Up People', in T. Heller, M. Sosna, and D. E. Wellbery (eds.), *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 222-36; W.K. Jones, 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census', in N. G. Barrier (ed.), *Census in British India: New Perspectives* (Delhi: Manohar, 1984), pp. 73-101.

<sup>28</sup> Lahore District, Statistical Tables, File no. K21 (R) XV, (1936).

<sup>29</sup> J.C. Oman, *Indian Life: Religious and Social - Cults, Customs and Superstitions* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), p.181.

<sup>30</sup> H. Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> A. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.26.

<sup>32</sup> These included the Arya Samaj, Singh Sabha, Hindu Mahasabha, Sanathan Dharam Sabha, Hindu Sabha, Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam and Jama'at-i-Ahmadiyya.

<sup>33</sup> Founded in 1875, the group's number rose to nearly 100,000 in 1901, and during the next four decades the Samaj found in North India more than 150 schools and colleges, generally called Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) institutions. The role of Arya Samaj in the growth of communalism in Punjab has been well-researched. Oman, *Indian Life*, p.183; V. Langohr, 'Colonial Education System and the Spread of Local Religious Movements: The Cases of British Egypt and Punjab', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, (2005), pp.161-189; K.W. Jones, 'Communalism in the Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contribution', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 28, 1 (1968), pp. 46-7; 'Ham Hindu Nahun: Arya-Sikh Relations, 1877-1905', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 32, 3 (1973), pp. 457-75; and also see G. Barrier, 'The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in the Punjab, 1894-1908', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26, 3 (1967), pp. 363-79.

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<sup>34</sup> Oman, *Indian Life*, pp.172-3

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Alike, the city witnessed communal situation in 1929 when Ilmuddin murdered the Hindu publisher Rajpal over a blasphemous issue.

<sup>36</sup> 'Report of the First Punjab Hindu Conference, held at Lahore, on 21st and 22nd October' (Lahore: Virjanand Press, 1909), p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> It was presented that the Muslim population in the Punjab rose to 10, 00,000, or 9 percent, between 1881 and 1901, while the number of Hindu increased 4 percent only. One reason given for the increase was because the Muslims were entitled to four marriages according the Islam. And also a large number of lower classes embraced Islam in this period.

<sup>38</sup> For example, they included Mohyal Mitter Press, Paisa Akhbar Press, Mofid-i-Am Press, Punjab Printing Press, Rajput Printing Press, Punjab Christian Press, Sewak Steam Press, Kashmir Press and Khatri Samachar Press.

<sup>39</sup> For example, the Kennedy Hall was allocated to the Christian students, while the North Hall and West Hall were assigned to the Hindu and Muslim students, respectively. Similarly, there were separate kitchens for the Hindu and Muslim boarders in the Government College's hostels- the Quadrangle and New Hostel.

<sup>40</sup> S. Gujral, 'Lahore Goes Up in Flames', in A. Saleem (ed.), *Lahore 1947* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> L. Kuper, 'Genocide and the Plural Society', in J. Hutchison and A.D. Smith (ed.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 262-69.

<sup>42</sup> Lahore District, Statistical Tables, File no. K21 (R) XV, (1936).

<sup>43</sup> To trace out the Hindu-Sikh-Muslim conflicts in colonial Lahore, I went through the clippings of *Times of India* and I would refer here to a few reported incidents. 'Lahore riots case: speech for prosecution', *Times of India* (New Delhi) July 22, 1907; 'Lahore escapes: communal riot averted', *Times of India*, July 2, 1923, p.7; 'Guerilla Warfare in Walled City', *Times of India*, May 5, 1927, p.9; 'Communal Tensions in Lahore', *Times of India*, Aug, 25, 1931, p.3; 'Defiant Lahore Muslim Mob: Procession Dispersed', *Times of India*, Aug 6, 1932, p.11; 'Menacing Situation in Lahore: Muslim Mob of 4,000 Lathi Charged by Police', *Times of India*, July 6, 1935, p.13; 'Riot Averted in Lahore', *Times of India*, Aug 9, 1933, p. 9; 'Grave Tension in Lahore', *Times of India*, Oct 25, 1935, p.9; 'Khaksar Trouble: More Arrests in Lahore', *Times of India*, June 14, 1940, p.9.

<sup>44</sup> 'The Lahore riots: educated classes blamed for exciting passions', *Times of India* (New Delhi) 18 May, 1927, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> K.K. Aziz, *The Coffee House of Lahore: A Memoir, 1942-57* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 2008), p.10.

<sup>46</sup> Evidences suggest there were periodically communal clashes on the festivals, such as Bakr-Id, Muharram, Ram Lila, Holi. In one case, in 1935, a clash over the issue of cow slaughter on the Bakra-Id day in Mogulpura suburb was narrowly averted by the in time arrival of police. See for example,

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‘Communal Riot Averted: Bakr-Id at Lahore, protest against cow slaughter’, *Times of India* (New Delhi) March 18, 1935, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> Aziz, *The Coffee House of Lahore*, pp.5-23. Aziz gives a long list of the important ‘habitues’ of all communities of the coffee house of Lahore who ‘moulded the lives and minds of a whole generation’.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Cricket at Lahore’, *Times of India* (New Delhi) 15 May, 1946, p.9.

<sup>49</sup> PHSA, ‘Journal of Forman Christian College, Lahore, 1946-47’.

<sup>50</sup> Talbot, *Divided Cities*; I. Ahmed, ‘Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing in Lahore in 1947’ in Talbot and Thandi, *People on the Move*, pp. 96–142.

<sup>51</sup> S. Ashraf, ‘The Postal Clerk’, in B. Sidhwa, *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), pp.51-64.

<sup>52</sup> For example see, FIR no. 78, Note Book no. 9/1, (4 December 1946); FIR no. 35, Note Book no. 2/7, (15 July 1946); FIR no. 67, Note Book no. 4/4, (19 October 1946), Mozang Thana, Lahore.

<sup>53</sup> For the Punjab Unionist Party’s consociational approach to politics during the period 1923-47, see I. Talbot, *Khizr Tiwana, The Punjab Unionist Party and the Partition of India* (London: Curzon, 1996).

<sup>54</sup> L. Carter (ed.), *Punjab Politics, 1936-1939: The Start of Provincial Autonomy--Governors' Fortnightly Reports and Other Key Documents* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), p. 47.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Million Volunteer’, *Times of India* (New Delhi) October 2, 1935, p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Tense Situation in Lahore: Hindus’ Counter Boycott; Leaders Appeal’, *Times of India* (New Delhi) September 24, 1935, p.11.

<sup>57</sup> Talbot, *Divided Cities*; Ahmed, ‘Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing in Lahore in 1947’.

<sup>58</sup> PPAI, Week Ending 17 May 1947, p. 255.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Fires at Lahore’, *The Times* (London) 19 May 1947, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Jenkins to Mountbatten, 31 May 1947, Jenkins Papers, Mss Eur D 803/3, p. 23, O.I.O.C.

<sup>61</sup> PPAI, Week Ending 21 June, P. 330.

<sup>62</sup> PPAI, Week Ending 31 May 1947, p. 277.

<sup>63</sup> PPAI, Week Ending 5 July 1947, p. 357.

<sup>64</sup> Note by Field Marshal Sir C Auchineck, Joint Defence Council, 15 August 1947, *TP*, vol. XII, doc 486, p.735.



## **Sikh Failure on the Partition of Punjab in 1947**

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The All-India Muslim League achieved Pakistan, the Indian National Congress secured India but the Shiromani Akali Dal got nothing on the eve of the British departure in 1947 although the Sikh community had collaborated closely with the colonial power. The demand of the Sikh community for a separate Sikh state and accession of more territories to this state came to naught as a consequence of partition of Indian subcontinent. The decision of joining India by the Akali leadership enslaved this community to a mammoth majority in which they were only one per cent. Different scholars took variety of directions in exploring the roots of the Sikh failure in the final breakdown. According to Sher Muhammad Grewal, Sikhs failed to achieve something beneficial in the political arena staged in 1940s because they were very simple people and could not apprehend the sensitive situation of Punjab politics.<sup>1</sup> Sangat Singh claims that the principal reason behind the Sikh failure was the incompetent Akali leadership<sup>2</sup> while Sardar Hukam Singh opines that situational politics left no positive options for the Akali leaders, therefore their decision to join India was the best choice.<sup>3</sup> These scholars tried to solve this tangle by pointing out some specific aspect of the question which still leaves many gaps. Actually, there were ample reasons which combined and resulted in the Sikh failure. This article traces the factors which compelled the Sikh political leadership to reject Pakistan and decide in favour of India in 1947.

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### **Background**

The Muslims and Sikhs had both been ruling communities of the Punjab<sup>4</sup> therefore both were confident to claim their political inheritance when the British decided to depart from India. Punjab had great importance for the Muslims as they were the majority occupying this area, but sacrosanct for the Sikhs from the religious point of view because it was birthplace of their Gurus,<sup>5</sup> therefore their religious affiliation made it sacred for them. Islam came from Arabia and many Muslims from other countries had settled in the Punjab while Sikhism was an indigenous religion and its followers were purely local people which convinced them to claim the region as Sikh homeland. Hindus had also been a ruling community in the Punjab in certain periods. After 1849 the British emerged as a new ruling community in the region when they wrested power from Sikhs. A set of political reforms introduced by the new masters ensured majority rule over the minorities which caused unrest among the religious minorities. Thus, the British Punjab presented a very complex nature of communitarian position. Nevertheless, Sikhs were the most vulnerable community in the political domain due to their scattered strength

throughout the region.<sup>6</sup> They did not have a majority in any district of the British Punjab. Although the British had been favourable to the Sikhs, they tried to secure consensus among the major political parties working at the national level for constitutional settlement and this made the Sikh position very weak as they were concentrated mainly in the Punjab only. The Sikhs and Muslims had emerged as rival forces because of particular reasons which affected the politics especially in the British Punjab.

Retrospectively, the Muslim saints<sup>7</sup> had attracted the local masses irrespective of colour, race, caste and financial status and enabled them to understand the real Islamic message of humanity, fraternity and simplicity. To Trilochan Singh, the Muslim saints impressed upon the non-Muslims particularly the downtrodden, oppressed, humiliated and neglected Hindus and achieved huge conversions.<sup>8</sup> Later on, the extremist behaviour of Muslim liberalism and Muslim orthodoxy caused shocking blows to Muslim rule in India. A gap emerged in the religious sphere of Indian society particularly in the Punjab. Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) undoubtedly filled this gap by introducing the mixed religious tenets of Islam and Hinduism and got abundant conversion from Hindus and a little number from the Muslims as well.<sup>9</sup> Sikhism emerged in the Punjab during Muslim rule and Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, experienced dynasties of Ibrahim Lodhi (Indian ruler, died in 1526) and Zahir-ud-Din Mohammad Babur (first Mughal ruler of India, 1526-1530). The nature of the relationship between the Muslim rulers and Sikh Gurus should have been that of the ruler and the ruled but the Gurus opted to live an independent life without any fear of the authoritarian governments. This sense of personal liberty involved them in the activities of their own choice including politics which was dangerous for them at that time when they could be slain for political power as a royal tradition. For this reason, the political activities of the Gurus were never overlooked by the central authority. They were called for questioning, were pressurized, imprisoned, tortured and assassinated ruthlessly.<sup>10</sup> Though the political factors forced the Muslim rulers to take stern action against the Sikh Gurus, this was perceived as an action against the 'religious heroes' of Sikhs which could never be tolerated by their followers. Therefore, murder of the Gurus during Muslim rule was the root cause which never let the Muslim-Sikh relations prosper in the Punjab. Both the communities had been living side by side but the religious heritage kept them divided as religious rivals. The later rulers, both Muslims and Sikhs, manifested the same attitude towards each other till the arrival of the British in the Punjab.

The British defeated the Sikhs in the mid-19th century and annexed Punjab but soon after the Anglo-Sikh Wars (1846 and 1849) both the communities began to get along with each other. The Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus proved loyal citizens and became the strength of the British rule in the subcontinent. The newly introduced educational, political, economic, agricultural, publishing and other reforms created a new sense of communitarian empowerment and then nationalism in the communities. All this encouraged them in gaining more and more rights and concessions in the constitutional packages which

consequently resulted in communalism. The two world wars (1914-19 and 1939-45) weakened the British position in the colonies which accelerated and encouraged the nationalist struggle for political rights. The locals had sacrificed lives in the battlefields in favour of the British which convinced them to treat the locals in a friendlier manner. The Sikhs were the most favoured community in this regard but they had to face several setbacks in the political domain. Their demands were turned down while Hindus and Muslims appeared successful communities in securing maximum benefits. Several reasons can be attributed to this ruinous end.

### **Sikh Leadership**

The British introduced a system by which they could control the Punjab through local eminent families while the rural elite were already anxious to lead the society under the auspices of the new masters. The British granted vast lands and concessions to the landlords which boosted their stature among the locals. Voting right was not given to the common people, which prevented the masses from forming organizations to fight for their rights. At the initial stage, the Sikh leadership also came from the landed aristocracy which, despite all their endeavors, proved less productive for the Sikh community. The Khalsa National Party<sup>11</sup> was enjoying British support and political concessions as a part of the coalition government. On the other hand, the religio-political leadership<sup>12</sup> emerged mainly from the lower middle class with a bellicose inclination. It lacked political vision, therefore the Akalis were simultaneously anti-government, anti-Muslim League,<sup>13</sup> anti-Congress,<sup>14</sup> anti-Unionist,<sup>15</sup> anti-British, anti-Khalsa National Party and anti-Communist and other Sikhs who were not their allies. Contrarily, the Akalis seemed to be in coalition with the Muslim League in the NWFP (1943), Punjab Unionist Party (1942), British and the Congress.<sup>16</sup> Leadership from rich families proves beneficial for a community especially when it lacks a genuine leadership which comes up over time. On the other hand, leadership from lower classes takes time to free itself from the shackles of existing deprivation and natural psychological complexities. They usually cannot get rid of the submissiveness, economic and political inferiority infused in their nature. The emerging Sikh leadership of that time was under the same influencing factors. The Sikh leadership sometimes would adopt aggressive approach but lost the fervour whenever some British agents approached them. Major Short and Sir Penderel Moon's<sup>17</sup> activities prove this contention. While dealing with the Congress, the Sikh leadership many times demonstrated compromising behaviour on political issues.

The Sikh landed aristocracy dominated the socio-political domain and the Akalis considered them as their real rivals and started vilifying them in the eyes of the Sikh *panth*.<sup>18</sup> Ignoring the traditional political forces was not a sign of prowess because these Sikh leaders had personal and working relationship with the Muslim leaders and the British officials who could help build political bridges. The Akali popularity at the grassroots level had the prospect for



political mobilisation but it should not have sidelined the faction of the traditional politicians.

The other weak aspect of Akali politics was the greed to control the Gurdwara funds.<sup>19</sup> The rapacity of finances or the land and property of the Gurdwaras dented the strength of the Akalis. They had been accepting funds from the Hindu leaders and could sacrifice anything to gain control over the Gurdwara funds. Such proclivities damaged the very spirit of their movement. Gurmit Singh confirms that one cause of Akali failure may be the Gurdwara funds. He writes that all the Sikh leaders were selfish and were asking for patronage. None of them were there to work selflessly for the Sikhs.<sup>20</sup> In the bye-election campaign in Batala in September 1941, the Akalis and the rival followers of Mohindar Singh used *dangs* (bamboo sticks) and *kirpans* in the fight which injured Majhail and forced him to flee. The police reports expose that the Akalis and Nihangs were engaged in the fight for the possession of a few plots of land at Nankana Sahib.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the Akalis opposed the Nihang Sikhs due to the fear that they would gain an overwhelming influence in the Gurdwara administration which would deprive the former of the funds. However they supported the same faction when they found them useful for themselves. Such contradictory and selfish strategies could not be beneficial for the Sikh future. Sincerity of purpose was badly missing in the political creed of the Akalis.

The Sikh leaders tried to purport themselves as nationalists which aggravated their confusion because their agenda in essence was communal. They were not clear what to do with the provincial and national politics. Sardar Ujjal Singh in 1973 declared it a reality that the Sikhs had always been 'having a national outlook along with their anxiety to protect the legitimate rights of the Sikhs.'<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, they incessantly denied the political reality of the communal status of Sikh politics. Time was needed for them to play a communal role and which could help them to find better solutions to their problems but they never accepted this reality. Nationalism did not suit the Sikhs and their political demands. Their struggle was purely of a communal nature while they kept on posing as nationalists. H. V. Hodson presents the same picture when he writes that the Sikhs and Muslims had been at war with each other for two and a half centuries 'first for communal survival and then for the mastery of the Punjab.'<sup>23</sup> They could well project their demands as a communal party as Gandhi had suggested to Master Tara Singh in his letter that the Sikhs were playing communal politics and their violent strategy did not match with that of the Congress.<sup>24</sup> Sikhs resented this advice, considering it a taunt, rather than mending their way in light of this valuable suggestion.

### **Congress' Influence**

Sikhism attracted the main bulk of the followers from Hinduism. The impact of this link remained intact and affected the political idealism of the Sikhs. The Congress repeatedly betrayed them on many issues but the Sikh leadership never thought to get rid of the undue influence of the Hindus. The Congress

gave word in the Ravi Pledge of 1929<sup>25</sup> that no constitutional package would be conceded by the Congress until the Sikhs approved it but practically they never honoured this pledge. They always went to the All-India Muslim League<sup>26</sup> and the British for negotiations without consulting the Sikhs. Despite this, the Akalis and Central Akali Dal had been motivating their followers to join the Congress in maximum numbers<sup>27</sup> so that their lobby within the Congress became influential and strong. At every crucial moment, the Congress ignored the Sikhs but the Akali leadership did not dare to adopt an independent direction in their politics. The acceptance of the Congress' influence proved pernicious for the Sikh future.

### **Violence in Politics**

The Akalis made the fullest use of religion and immersed violence in politics. Emotionalism was adopted by the Akali leadership to impress upon the masses<sup>28</sup> which forced them towards the violent mode of politics. Master Tara Singh, in the flow of emotionalism did not even spare Guru Gobind Singh<sup>29</sup> and is alleged to have voiced during the days of the Communal Award agitation that if the Guru did not help them to achieve the victory then he was not their saviour.<sup>30</sup> He could not discard Sikhism as promised in public so the rhetoric was just to provoke sentiments of the audience which does not suit a genuine leader especially who enjoys the religious trust of the community as well. The Sikh leaders frequently quoted Khalsa and the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh who, to them, had dented Muslim rule in India. They supported and secured support of the Hindu Mahasabha in the Punjab in the name of enmity with the Muslims. Although they detested the Muslims this did not seem a proper time to let such issues come up. They should have overcome such sentiments for the time being and tried to hold maximum discussions to reach a better solution for the Sikhs. They, however, projected before British representatives, particularly the Punjab Governor Evan Jenkins<sup>31</sup> that the League wanted to eliminate the Sikhs and Sikhism from the earth.<sup>32</sup> Although Master Tara Singh repudiated the incident of brandishing kirpan on the stairs of the Punjab Assembly in a talk with Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal but he admits that his own lieutenants had misquoted it just to highlight the Akali courage and unremitting enthusiasm against the Pakistan scheme:

The story had been made up by politicians with vested interests with the goal of inciting the populace, and picked up and carried thereafter by overzealous news reporters. The story was even promoted by some of Master Ji's own Akali followers who erroneously felt that it would promote their cause of opposing the creation of Pakistan.<sup>33</sup>

So violence seemed a clarion call of the day in the politics which undermined the true nature of the righteousness of the Sikh demands.

### **Ignoring Direct Stakeholders**

The Sikhs erroneously depended on the British Governor of Punjab and the Viceroy, particularly in the last decade of the British raj, who advised them again and again to negotiate with either party to bargain on their strength in the Punjab. No party, whether the League or the Congress, could neglect them in the political sphere but they kept on approaching the Governor and Viceroy with requests to 'do something for the Sikhs.' The clear picture of the political developments could be dealt with frequent discussions with the League and the Congress which were the direct stakeholders but the Sikh dependence on the goodwill of the British was surprising at this critical juncture. They kept on moving such requests to Lord Mountbatten who conveyed the same to Jawaharlal Nehru who turned them down on some specific reasons.<sup>34</sup> Ignoring the real stakeholders and continual pursuance of the British could not produce any useful solution for the Sikhs and ultimately they had to endure the catastrophe.

### **Disunity among Sikhs**

The Akali policy to sideline and humiliate the Sikh aristocracy, Communists, Mazhabi Sikhs, Congress-supporting Sikhs, and other groups proved detrimental in the long run. Every Sikh organization or group was an integral part of the tiny community. Being a religious and political representative body, it was the moral duty of the Shiromani Akali Dal to adopt a reconciliatory and absorbing attitude towards all the factions working on different platforms. But disunity was so pervasive among them that the Akali Dal itself could not avoid factionalism within the party. It was divided into Giani Kartar Singh and the Nagoke groups and the top Akali leadership had to back a specific group in the Gurdwara elections. The dual membership of many Sikhs was another problem as many were enjoying affiliation with more than one party. The party system at the time was not exclusive and a person was allowed to have dual membership which created a problem of discipline and mobilisation. It loosened the followers to submit to other leadership and discipline. A Sikh was a Congressite and the Akali member at the same time or a Communist and Congressite simultaneously. It went against the political spirit in terms of the ideologies. This facility sowed the seeds for disunity. Responsibility went to the leadership to maintain party discipline but no attention was paid to this problem. The Unionist Muslims also became victim of the same problem when once they joined Muslim League under the Jinnah-Sikandar Pact in October 1937 and then had to surrender before the League in the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> The League secured an opportunity to dominate in the ranks of the Unionist Muslims.

Some writers are of the view that the Sikh masses never backed the Akali Dal fully and as such the masses were responsible for its failure. To Gurmit Singh, the excuse of Master Tara Singh was justifiable, that the Sikh voters never cooperated with the leadership and gave them just 23 seats in the Punjab Assembly in 1946 while 10 were gifted to the Congress.<sup>36</sup> As a matter of fact,

sacrifices of the Sikh masses, from the Gurdwara Reform Movement till the elections of 1946, nullify the stance taken by Master Tara Singh and Gurmit Singh. The responsibility of losing 10 seats lies on the shoulders of the leaders who had constantly been advising the Sikhs to join the Congress. The Sikh masses did a lot for the Akali leadership and responded zealously whenever they called for *morcha* politics and on other occasions. They paid money and sacrificed lives on the call of the Sikh leadership. Moreover, if all the Sikh parties were not in a position to oppose the Congress, how could the Sikh masses take a stand against it? The political culture popularized by the Akalis convinced them that the sagacious policy for them was to support the Congress. In various conferences, the Akali and anti-Akali Sikh leaders had been offering their unconditional services to the Congress and exhorting their respective members to join the Congress in more and more numbers so that their influence within the Congress circles against the other Sikh parties could be increased.<sup>37</sup> The Sikh masses played no role in the failure instead they followed whichever Sikh party approached them and presented their programme with sound arguments. They had diverted their sympathies from the traditional leadership to the Akalis. What else could they do? The Akalis brainwashed them through speeches and statements that the Muslims were their enemies and the Hindus were their friends. Since the leaders showed allegiance to the Congress and the British therefore the masses followed them. The masses did believe and demonstrate practically what they were taught. Therefore, Gurmit Singh's assertion accusing the masses cannot be justified.

Most importantly the Akali leadership lacked flexibility and competence to respond to a rapidly changing political environment. They should have foreseen all possible alternatives which might come out during dialogue with the other communities. Dialogical rationale in the politics was the need of the time. With a fixed point of view, Master Tara Singh undertook the anti-British stance while the Sikh community needed an opposite policy.<sup>38</sup> He took the British advice and showed strong reliance on them but acted differently. The decisions and erratic postures at this critical moment meant a narrow role and a disaster for the Sikhs. He was a Sikh by religion but a 'Hindu' by nature as Kapur Singh has written which exposed his pro-Congress character. The Sikh students named him a '*Hindu putt*' (Hindu son).<sup>39</sup> Gurmit Singh writes that 'Master Tara Singh lured by the false promises of the Congress leaders gave a wrong lead to the Sikh Community.'<sup>40</sup> Therefore, his politics as a Sikh leader helped the Hindus to secure a vast area, along with the military and a food bowl at a cost to the Sikhs.

Master Tara Singh remained unchallenged as the sole leader of the Sikhs during the period 1923 to 1947. The Sikh masses rendered their wholehearted support to him but at the most sensitive time he went into the background<sup>41</sup> and left the Sikh *panth* at the mercy of Sardar Baldev Singh and Sardar Swaran Singh.<sup>42</sup> Master Tara Singh was considered the strength of his community and a political force ever since the Pakistan scheme was passed but he pulled himself out of the mainstream and went behind the scene in politics. Although he kept on guiding the Akalis<sup>43</sup> his declaration of aloofness dispirited the

masses who were unaware of the internal party issues. In his absence, the reign of Sikh politics went into the hands of the Jat leaders, especially at this crucial time of negotiations with other political leaders and the Viceroy and did not prove to be a correct decision. One of the main causes of Master Tara Singh's aloofness was the severe opposition from within the Akali circles which convinced him to remain in the background for the time being as a deliberate tactic.<sup>44</sup> The Akali leadership at that time seemed to be working for self projection while they had put the future of Sikhs at stake.

It seems relevant to take personal weaknesses of Master Tara Singh into account. He was headmaster of a high school who lacked the vision of a national or provincial political leadership. There was no mechanism to train headmasters to become politicians, rather because they were government servants, they were not allowed to take part in political activities. Given the prevailing feudal structure, the landlords' relations with the political families and their influence in Punjab affairs, this discouraged an ordinary person to emerge as an influential and a successful politician. In this regard, although Master Tara Singh proved to be an exception and became the centre of Sikh politics, he had no relationship with the other prominent political families and this became a negative point for him and distanced him from other influential families. Training in the legal profession and/or sound family connections were required to become a successful politician but Master Tara Singh lacked both of them.

Another weak aspect of Sikh politics was the negligible role of the Sikh aristocracy in politics. The feudal or traditional leadership mainly focused on their personal benefits in the Punjab and did not assist in with the emergence of a parallel leadership within the Sikh community which may have paved the way for the middle and lower middle classes to come forward. The traditional leadership may have served the Sikhs better if they had come forward to dominate the arena. The Unionist politics harmed their reputation severely and put them in an awkward position as their respective communities considered them traitors and selfish. The Sikh parties presented the Unionist Sikhs as traitors and stooges of the British and the Muslim Unionists. They had not provided any revolutionary service towards the *panth*<sup>45</sup> which could have maintained their influence among the masses. They never tried to counter the propaganda propagated by the newly emerged Sikh parties with good planning. Therefore, soon their grip over their sympathizers began to wane.

The Sikh demographic pattern was such a critical disadvantage which could not be adequately addressed by the Sikh leaders. They did not form a majority of the population in any district of the Punjab. As a result, this scattered strength forced the Sikh leadership to align with the Congress. A competent leadership could have met the challenge with a well-worked out strategy but the Sikhs could not hit upon such a leadership or strategy throughout this period. The communal clashes which erupted from time to time in different corners of the Punjab proved troubling. The Sikhs reported numerous complaints against the Muslim but their enmity with the League was not handled properly and was considered a weak point in the political arena.

The League was a political party and it had demonstrated nothing negative against the Sikhs since its inception in politics. The League leadership had been supportive of the Sikh cause from the 1920s onward but no positive response came from their side. However, the League believed in minority rights and tried to bring the Sikh political leaders closer during the League ministry-making days but they never showed any flexibility. The partition of the Punjab requires to be studied further in the light of the British-Sikh and then Muslim-Sikh relations. If India was to get something from the Punjab, this could only be possible with Sikh help. The Punjabi Hindus were of reasonable size, far more than the Sikhs but they did not come to the front as the Sikhs did. The Congress leadership was aware of this fact and saw the political goings-on on the Sikh part and supported them because all the Sikh political activities were geared to fulfill the Congress agenda. When the Sikhs tried to take an independent course like the *Azad Punjab* scheme or *Sikhistan*, the Hindus opposed them and forced them to reverse their stand on the schemes pledged with their community. The coincidence of compatibility of the Akali demands and the Congress's maintained the image of the Akali Dal among the Sikhs otherwise their failures could have drowned the party for ever.

The leadership crisis was a potent factor in the Sikh failure which forestalled the possibility of meeting their appropriate demands as Sangat Singh writes:

The Sikhs did not have a leader of towering stature, of high standing, higher education, much less a Bar-at-Law or a statesman who could exert his primacy.<sup>46</sup>

To their chagrin the Sikh community constantly lacked a quality leadership. They were considered simple to the extent of being imprudent but nothing was done to redress the weakness. Sardar Kapur Singh in his book shares a light discussion over a cup of tea with his other friends. In 1932, Sardar Kapur, Chaudhri Barkat Ali, Abdul Rahim (ICS) and Shri Shanti Sarup started a discussion on the possibility of creation of Pakistan at Cambridge. Ch. Barkat Ali said that everyone knew that the determination of the Muslims would help them in winning Pakistan. Shanti replied that the Hindus would do nothing else but use an effective weapon against Muslims i.e. Sikhs. Everybody started laughing. Sardar Kapur recalls that he protested and declared that the Sikhs were not as *lohley* and *khotey* (simple and fools) as perceived by the fellowman. Nevertheless, Lala ji asserted that the time would decide whether they were imprudent or not. Kapur writes that ultimately the Sikhs proved in the late 1940s what he had tried to deny.<sup>47</sup>

In March 1946, Surjit Singh Majithia opposed the separate electorates and Sikh state on the ground that by accepting the principle of Pakistan, the Sikhs would weaken their position and the task of the League would become easier while the Sikh state would even then be a doubtful phenomenon.<sup>48</sup> Amazingly he did not address his own questions; for example, if the Sikh state was not feasible because it had to be dependent either on the Muslims or Hindus, could

they be free of the Hindu domination with the suggested principle of the joint electorates within united India?

Sikhs issued every statement that could undermine the Muslim cause whether it helped their own cause or not. At the crucial juncture when some practicable and beneficial alternatives were required in the light of ground realities, the Akali leadership came up with a new objection against the census report of 1941. They were of the view that it did not present accurate population figures particularly of the Muslims.<sup>49</sup> If addressed, the lengthy process of rechecking the census reports was not acceptable for the major parties. The redress, as sought by the Sikh leadership, could take a very long time and even then it may have been unacceptable to other communities because the Muslims had already filed objections that the non-Muslim officials had made wrong entries during the working of the census.<sup>50</sup> The Akali leaders were trying to raise such issues during the negotiations and these added more complexities. These newly raised points could hardly strengthen their position in dealing with the core issues. On 29 May 1946, Jogindra Singh initiated a new demand in a letter to Major Short, on whether the Muslims would accept parity in the provinces as they themselves had in the centre.<sup>51</sup> The Sikhs had rejected the Cabinet Mission proposals but even then they were pursuing a change in the plan which testifies to their weak performance in the political contest.

### **One Item Agenda**

The demand for partition of the Punjab in the 1940s was a clear-cut decision of the Sikhs to join India. By this blunt and bare tilt, they had drawn a line between India and Pakistan by dividing the Punjab into two portions.<sup>52</sup> Actually, they did not need to stand for division if there had been a slight possibility of their joining Pakistan. After the 3rd June Plan, they clearly stood for India given that all their demands in the discussions with the Governor and Viceroy related to the Indian government and not Pakistan. Therefore, the Akalis' pro-Congress politics as a one item agenda throttled the possibility of their being workable alternatives for the Sikh future.

### **Evan Jenkins as Administrator**

The office of the Governor of Punjab had a decisive position in the provincial affairs under the constitutional powers. As head, this office was supposed to perform its duties honestly under the democratic spirit because it had to protect the democratic system introduced by the British. It was also a custodian of the minorities living in Punjab. During the initial decades of British rule in the province, this office was used to strengthen the pro-government Unionists because the British needed a peaceful Punjab for recruitment in the army and for other support. After the elections of 1937, this policy needed to be revised as the major political parties of India had plunged into regional politics whereas the Governors followed the retrograde traditional strategy which

furthered the decay of communal peace and harmony. Sikhs trusted Jenkins a lot but he gave them nothing. By using his friendly relations with the Sikhs, he obtained information from them regarding their plans and dispatched it to the Viceroy. He could have convinced them to join the League coalition ministry after the elections of 1946<sup>53</sup> which could have released tension between Sikhs and Muslims on the issue of Pakistan and this patch-up might have revived communal harmony and could have secured territorial unity. The Governor's role to bring communal harmony in the province could have consolidated the democratic tradition as well. A positive role by the Governor in the government decision-making process would have benefitted the Punjab but unfortunately he pursued a negative agenda which resulted in the utmost endeavour to resist the League ministry. The encouragement of undemocratic measures was a perilous game which locked the way for communal harmony. The apologetic policy of the Governor was one of the factors which consequently caused the territorial split.

Sikhs shared information, desire and even their secret plans with Jenkins. As far as the Sikh strategy was concerned, sharing Sikh grievances with the Governor was their political right but placing blind trust in the British was not an appreciable strategy of the Akali leadership. They should have considered several options to cope with the political manipulations but to place their trust mainly on Jenkins, Louis Mountbatten and the government machinery proved to be a stunning setback for them. The 'notional boundary' mechanism for the partition plan was obvious as all the stakeholders including the Sikhs had agreed to it but they kept on rallying against it whilst making requests to the British authorities for a special favour.<sup>54</sup>

The Governor's office was playing the role of a post office. He dispatched collected information from the local leaders to the Viceroy while the province needed careful planning to cope with the fragile situation. Responsibility of the Governor was mounting day by day as the province was heading towards chaos and a split and local leadership was working under the influence of the central command. But this office displayed nothing more than a post office as on 30 July 1947, Evan Jenkins, through a report, informed the Viceroy that Giani Kartar Singh appeared in Nankana Sahib and caused serious trouble on 28 July but the Sikhs were convinced to abandon their plan of *hartal* expected on 5 August under the impression that such protests might endanger their position.<sup>55</sup> Most of the time, he loyally conveyed just messages or reports about the meetings with Punjabi leaders but practically took no action against any troublemaker.

According to Raghuvendra Tanwar, the Unionist Party had no place in the newly emerged political environment of the 1940s, which was a jolt to the harmony between Muslims and Sikhs.<sup>56</sup> The Governor wanted to seize the League's influence which had downed the Unionists to the bottom of political life. His intention was to go ahead with his personal rule in the Punjab. Therefore, he exploited the political situation on the issue of the war effort, compensation for the soldiers returned from fighting and the minorities. Communal riots were declared as initiations by the League partly by the



British and fully by Sikh and Hindu leaders. The Punjab issue was a political matter while the riots were purely an administrative and a judicial matter, which could be solved with the 'rule of law'. However, the Governor could hardly find time from the political manipulations to restore peace in the affected regions. He confined his character to the main job of transfer of power. He believed that the British should focus on the transfer of power and rest of the evils would be the issue of the newly created governments of India and Pakistan. Jenkins was on good terms with the Sikhs but could not convince them to abstain from the violent strategy they had planned. He failed to utilise his friendly relations.<sup>57</sup>

### Undemocratic Stance

Principle of majority rule is the spirit of democracy but after the elections of 1946 it was entirely ignored by the anti-League forces including the Governor and the Congress. According to the results, the League turned out to be the largest party in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. The party position was as follows:

Party	Seats
Muslim League	75
Congress	51
Unionists	21(13 Muslims)
Panthic Sikhs	21
Independents	07

*Source:* Letter from Glancy to Wavell, 28 February 1946 in Lionel Carter, ed., *Punjab Politics, 1940-1943* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2005), pp. 172-74.

Under the party position, the election results offered the following options:

1. Premier should be a 'Leaguer' as the largest Assembly party;
2. Premier should be a 'Congressman' as it stood second by numbers;
3. The Sikhs and Unionists were at the third position in the option for the Premier office.

Setting aside all the democratic norms, the Congress, Unionist Party, Sikhs and other non-Muslims joined hands under the auspices of the Governor against the League and formed a coalition ministry under Khizr Hayat Tiwana who had only 13 Muslim members with him. In this way, the largest party was forced to sit on the opposition benches. The Sikhs committed a grave mistake by rejecting the League because they were the co-partners of the League in the coming political scenario. They should have valued the political mandate of the Muslims in favour of the League. By this, they could have secured their due share in the concessions. The League's victory was a vivid sign of their importance in the Punjab which was to be recognized by other parties but their mandate was not honoured. Iftikhar Malik writes that Khizr Tiwana should

have provided a chance to the League to form the government<sup>58</sup> but no logical step was taken up. As a matter of fact, history of the Punjab may have been very different if the Sikhs had acknowledged the League's mandate.

### **The Last Decision**

Creation of a Sikh state or joining Pakistan or India were the main options available to the Sikhs but as freedom was coming closer the Sikhs started restricting their options. Their leaders were not talking to the Muslim leaders and were least interested in taking advantage of their bargaining position. They were pleasing the Hindu leadership by posing themselves as the champions of united India and protectors of the Hindus. They relied on the Congress which had betrayed them on every important political turn in their history. The Congress and the Hindu press gave a cold shoulder to the Sikhs but still they did not take the independent course in politics.

The second option was to join Pakistan which seemed impossible as the Sikhs had always been raising voices against the Muslim Unionists who had been their allies in the coalition governments. The communal riots, especially in the northern districts of the Punjab, stamped the anti-Sikh character of the Muslims as the Sikhs and Hindus were slain and their property was looted during daylight. These riots convinced them to part with the Muslims for good. Under these circumstances, purely a Muslim state could never be acceptable for them. They also feared that Muslims would eliminate them and Sikhism from the earth.<sup>59</sup> This perception was built on the prevalent scenario of communal disturbances and past conversions to Islam in the Muslim majority areas.<sup>60</sup> The third option was Khalistan or Sikhistan which had no concrete foundation due to the scattered population of the Sikhs and dissent within the community, the attitude of the Congress and the League which were the main stakeholders. They had negligible numerical strength and disunity among themselves. The Akali leadership had chalked out an unofficial option i.e. to capture Punjab by force after the departure of the British.<sup>61</sup> This was a dangerous option and could cause loss of human lives, but they propagated it and were sure to materialise it. Several options could have worked but to contemplate use of force at the time of partition against Muslims narrowed their vision.

### **Dilemma of Punjabi Leadership**

The land of five rivers could not produce a leader of national calibre<sup>62</sup> in all the communities and this resulted in havoc at the critical juncture of history. The Punjabi leadership seemed satiated with their personal benefits in the domains of the Punjab. The Sikh leadership also became victim of this traditional weakness. Moreover, they had to deal with the competent leadership like M. A. Jinnah, M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru which put them in a defensive position.

## Conclusion

Creation of Pakistan was a political issue which was being dealt with through constitutional negotiations, but the Sikhs were depending mostly on bluster and agitation. The League was a direct stakeholder in the Punjab after winning elections of 1946 but the Sikhs did not welcome and honour this victory. They continued their traditional policy of attributing every evil to the League. They intermittently got into conflict not only with the League but also with the British, Congress and the Unionists. They launched a war on all fronts at this crucial time. Attaining Khalistan was the best option; joining Pakistan would have been the second best option while joining India was never a good option for them but they went for it in 1947 without paying attention to British advice and the concessions offered<sup>63</sup> by the League leadership.

Despite friendly relations between Sikhs and the British, the Shiromani Akali Dal could not achieve any success. Their objective to secure maximum territory or a free state when the region was going to be partitioned among Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities came to naught. Sikh leadership, in the run up to partition, could not gauge the depth of the political issues confronting their community. They joined hands with the Congress and favoured united India in which they were only one per cent of the population. The main reasons behind this decision was their religious and cultural affinity to Hinduism, weak leadership, disunity, Mughal atrocities during the early centuries of the rise of Sikh tradition, and the Muslim onslaught in the late 1940s. M. A. Jinnah had warned them that by joining Hindus, they would repent one day but it would be too late<sup>64</sup> to revise their decision but unluckily they met the same fate.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Sher Muhammad Grewal, 'Quaid-i-Azam and Sikhs,' *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* XXXVI (October 1999): pp. 1-17.

<sup>2</sup>Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Delhi: Uncommon Books, 1996), pp. 247-248.

<sup>3</sup>Gurmit Singh, *Failures of the Akali Leadership* (Sirsa: Usha Institute of Religious Studies, 1981), pp. 32-33.

<sup>4</sup>Punjab, the north-western region of India was annexed by the British in 1849 by defeating the Sikhs who had been a ruling community during 1799-1849 though they were a minority against the other communities such as Muslims and Hindus.

<sup>5</sup>Ten spiritual or religious leaders of Sikhs.

<sup>6</sup>The Sikhs constituted only 14/15 per cent of the population of the British Punjab.

<sup>7</sup>The local communities including Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, has much regard for Sufi, recluse persons who believed in love, peace, harmony and co-existence. Their purity, spirituality or transcendentalism proved a binding force

among the local communities. The Muslim saints are still honoured by Sikhs and Hindus.

<sup>8</sup>Dr. Trilochan Singh, 'Political Relations between Aurangzeb and the Sikh Gurus,' *Punjab History Conference* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968): pp. 100-101.

<sup>9</sup>Some Muslims accepted Sikhism as quoted by Harbans Singh. See, Harbans Singh, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, vol. 1 (Patiala: Punjabi University Patiala, 2002), pp. 35-36, 83.

<sup>10</sup>Guru Arjun Dev was murdered by Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1606, Guru Tegh Bhadur in the court of Aurangzeb Alamgir in 1675 and the two sons, Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh, of Guru Gobind Singh were buried alive at Sarhind.

<sup>11</sup>Khalsa National Party emerged in the late 1930s under Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, a Sikh landlord, which served the Sikh community by joining coalition ministry of the pro-British Unionist Party in the Punjab.

<sup>12</sup>Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Shiromani Akali Dal were the popular religious and political platforms which were founded in 1923.

<sup>13</sup>All-India Muslim League was founded in 1906 by the Indian Muslims. This was the party which ultimately won Pakistan.

<sup>14</sup>Indian National Congress was a Hindu representative political party, founded by an Englishman, A. O. Hume in 1885.

<sup>15</sup>Punjab Unionist Party was a pro-British party which was founded in 1923 by Mian Fazl-i-Husain and Ch. Chhotu Ram.

<sup>16</sup>They remained with the British and Congress throughout the political history of the British Punjab on crucial occasions.

<sup>17</sup>Deputy Commissioner of district Amritsar was said to be the ambassador of the British who had been in touch with the top Sikh leaders.

<sup>18</sup>As Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh, MLA was insulted in the Sikh Political Conference held on 29-30 May 1941 on supporting the Sikh recruitments for the war. Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, Punjab, vol. LXIII, 1941, file no. S-409, para 245.

<sup>19</sup>Letter from Emerson to Linlithgow, Linlithgow Papers in P. N. Chopra, ed., *Towards Freedom, 1937-47*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1985), 166.

<sup>20</sup>Gurmit Singh, *Failures of Akali Leadership*, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup>Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, file no. S-409, para. 406 and 482.

<sup>22</sup>Gurmit Singh, *Failures of Akali Leadership*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup>H. V. Hodson, *The Great Divide: Britain-India-Pakistan* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1970), p. 19.

<sup>24</sup>Sangat Singh, *Sikhs in History*, pp. 211-213.

<sup>25</sup>The annual session of the Congress was concluded on the bank of Ravi River, Lahore in 1929 in which the Hindu leadership promised that they would not ignore the minorities including Sikhs in the political decision.

<sup>26</sup>A political party founded in 1906 and struggled for the Muslim rights and then Pakistan.

<sup>27</sup>Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, file no. S-408, para 515; also see Kailash Chander Gulati, *The Akalis Past and Present* (New Delhi: Ashajanak Publications, 1974), p. 77.

<sup>28</sup>Punjabi people under the cultural psyche like bold and daring person who talks to destroy enemies.

<sup>29</sup>The Tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs who played excellent role in identity formation of the community.

<sup>30</sup>Sardar Kapur Singh, *Sachi Sakhi* (Gurmukhi) (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, 1993), pp. 88-89.

<sup>31</sup>Sir Evan Meredith Jenkins remained Governor of the Punjab from 8 April 1946 to 15 August 1947, the crucial period regarding partition of the Punjab.

<sup>32</sup>Meeting of Master Tara Singh with Evan Jenkins on 19 May 1947, MB1/D261.

<sup>33</sup>Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal, 'Urban Legend: Master Tara Singh's Kirpan,' [www.sikhchic.com/history/urban\\_legend\\_master\\_tara\\_singhs\\_kirpan](http://www.sikhchic.com/history/urban_legend_master_tara_singhs_kirpan), 4/6/2012.

<sup>34</sup>Letters from Lord Mountbatten to Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru on 4 July and Nehru's Reply on 7 July 1947, MB1/D290; see also Latif Sherwani, *The Partition of India and Mountbatten* (Karachi: Council for Pakistan Studies, 1986), p. 117.

<sup>35</sup>Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p. 208.

<sup>36</sup>Gurmit Singh, *Failures of Akali Leadership*, 54; also see Jaswant Singh, *Master Tara Singh: Jeevan Sangharsh tey Udaish* (Gurmukhi) (Amritsar: 1972), p. 196.

<sup>37</sup>Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, file no. S-408, para. 556, 515, 492, 475, 449, 398.

<sup>38</sup>Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p. 247.

<sup>39</sup>Kapur Singh, *Sachi Sakhi*, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup>Gurmit Singh, *Failure of Sikh Leadership*, p. 99.

<sup>41</sup>On 4 March 1944, Master Tara Singh resigned from the presidentship of the SGPC and Akali Dal. The Punjab Governor declared it a tactic. Fortnightly Report, (Punjab) March 1944, L/PJ/5/247.

<sup>42</sup>Both were Jat and MLAs. Baldev Singh was a Minister in the coalition government of the Punjab.

<sup>43</sup>IOR: L/P&J/10/33, Cabinet Mission: Sikhs.

<sup>44</sup>Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence, 1944, file S-412, para. 114.

<sup>45</sup>The educational and other services were worthwhile but the new circumstances required more than this.

<sup>46</sup>Sangat Singh, *Sikhs in History*, 247; see also Robin Jeffery, *What's Happening to India?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994), p. 71.

<sup>47</sup>Kapur Singh, *Sachi Sakhi*, p. 124.

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<sup>48</sup>*The Hindustan Times*, 25 March 1946.

<sup>49</sup>Report of Evan Jenkins to the Viceroy on 2 May 1947, MB1/D260.

<sup>50</sup>See Khwaja Hasan Nizami, 'Muslim League kay liey kam,' *Weekly Munadi* (Delhi) 8 January 1939.

<sup>51</sup>Letter from Jogindra Singh to Major Short (Private Secretary to Cripps, Office of Cabinet Mission, Viceroy's House, New Delhi) on 29 May 1946. IOR: L/P&J/10/33, Cabinet Mission: Sikhs.

<sup>52</sup>Note by GEB Abell 2 July 1947, MB1/D290.; see also Mss Eur F230/31, Moon Collection.

<sup>53</sup>In the elections 1946 the Muslim League entered the Assembly as the largest assembly party.

<sup>54</sup>Sikh leadership asked Evan Jenkins for a favour. Report of Evan Jenkins to the Viceroy on 2 May 1947, MB1/D260.

<sup>55</sup>Dr. Muhammad Azam Chaudhri, *Tehrik-i-Pakistan Mein Punjab ka Kirdar* (Urdu) (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1996), p. 440.

<sup>56</sup>Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: The Punjab Unionist Party, 1923-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1999), p. 194.

<sup>57</sup>Responsibility of the violence cannot be put on the shoulders of Jenkins totally because he had been convincing the Sikh leadership that violence could harm their position but other factors such as past and near past religious and political situations, anti-Muslim psyche and communal happenings, did not let them move from their anti-League contention. Nevertheless, he cannot be absolved totally as he never took 'practical steps' to bridle the violent leaders.

<sup>58</sup>Iftikhar Malik, 'Pluralism, Partition and Punjabisation: Politics of Muslim Identity in the British Punjab,' *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 5 (January-June 1998): pp. 118-19.

<sup>59</sup>The Hindu-Sikh Case For Nankana Sahib Tract by Giani Kartar Singh, MB1/D262.

<sup>60</sup>Most of the Muslim Jats in Pakistan were converted from Sikhism.

<sup>61</sup>Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: 1839-1964*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 240-41; also see MB1/D290; Lord Wavell also writes about it that the Sikhs could not forget their rule over the Punjab. See Penderel Moon, *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 288.

<sup>62</sup>Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, 'Voice from the Rural Punjab-Muslim-Sikh Relations in the British Punjab,' paper delivered at the PRG Meeting, Coventry University, UK, 28 June 2008; visit also <http://theprg.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/Akhtar-coventry-presentation2.doc>.

<sup>63</sup>Quaid-i-Azam assured the Sikhs that he would sign whatever they had written. Patwant Singh, *The Sikhs* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1999), pp. 206-207.

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<sup>64</sup>Sardar Kapur Singh, *Sachi Sakhi*, 144-145n; also see M. H. A. Isphahani, *Quaid-e-Azam-As I Knew Him* (Karachi: Forward Publication Trust, 1966), p. 219.

## The Novel as a Site for Cultural Memory: Gurdial Singh's *Parsa*

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This paper introduces the reader to Gurdial Singh's fiction which ranges from short stories to longer works such as *Unhoye* (1966), *Kuwela* (1968), *Addh Chanini Raat* (1972), *Anhe Ghore Da Daan* (1976) – recently made into an award winning Punjabi film by Gurvinder Singh – and *Parsa* (1991). Through these works Gurdial Singh radicalised the Punjabi novel and emerged as the messiah of the marginalised, dispossessed and oppressed. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part places Gurdial Singh as well as his work within the wider linguistic, historical and cultural frame and Punjabi literature. The second part provides nuanced readings and analyses of his novel *Parsa* and considers whether it could be perceived as an effective site for cultural memory of Punjabi people, their poetry, language and history.

### Introduction

As I reflect on the range and quality of Gurdial Singh's fiction, Plato's famous dictum inevitably comes to mind. In his *Republic*, Plato is believed to have stated that he looked upon a carpenter as a far better, a far more superior artist than the poet or the painter.<sup>1</sup> For Plato, the carpenter had come to embody the image of a complete artist or rather that of a total man. After all, wasn't he the one who imbued the formless with a sense of form and structure, infusing the rugged material reality with the untold creative possibilities?

By all counts, Gurdial Singh answers the Platonic description of a complete artist rather well. Born to a carpenter father, who insisted that his young son, too, should step into his shoes, Gurdial Singh chose to become instead a carpenter of words, a sculptor of human forms and a painter of life in all its myriad hues. On being refused funding by his parents for education beyond Matric, he decided to be his own mentor, slowly toiling his way up from a JBT teacher to a school lecturer, from there to a college lecturer and ultimately a professor at a Regional Centre of Punjabi University. His is a saga of courage, a profile in patience and gritty determination, which reads more like a work of fiction in progress. As one of the most illustrious exponents of the Punjabi language and culture, he has served its cause for well over four decades now.

It was only once he had started reading the classics that a strong, irrepressible desire was born in him to emulate the masters. Having realised rather early on in life that the social milieu, locale and specific problems varied according to the cultural context, he worked hard to first discover and then hone his own distinctive literary voice. His own life, and personal convictions born of his experiences, motivated him to identify with the poor and the



marginalized. It was this slice of life and its authenticity that got him his early success. In 1957, he published his first ever story called *Bhaganwale* in *Panj Darya*, a magazine edited then by Prof. Mohan Singh. Most of his stories were published in *Preetlarhi*, edited by the redoubtable Gurbaksh Singh.

Though he kick started his literary career by writing a short story, initial success came to him as a novelist when he published his first major, path-breaking work *Marhi Da Deeva* in 1964. Translated into English as *The Last Flicker* (Sahitya Akademi, 1991), it was hailed as a modern classic soon after it appeared in print. However, his early success didn't either stand in way of or turn into a disincentive for his later, equally powerful and significant works of long fiction such as *Unhoye* (1966), *Kuwela* (1968), *Addh Chanini Raat* (1972), *Anhe Ghore Da Daan* (1976) and *Parsa* (1991) et al.

Despite his immense success and popularity as a pioneering novelist in Punjabi, he continued to nurture his first love for short fiction. Small wonder, he has managed to produce as many as eight collections of short stories so far, the more notable among them being *Saggi Phul* (1962), *Kutta Te Aadmi* (1971), *Begana Pindh* (1985) and *Kareer Di Dhangri* (1991). Apart from nine novels, all of which have been widely read and acclaimed, he has authored some three plays, two prose works and no less than nine books for children. Besides, he has translated several of his own works into Hindi and those of the other reputed Indian and non-Indian writers into Punjabi. In addition to *Marhi Da Deeva*, three other novels of his viz., *Addh Chanini Raat (Night of the Half-Moon*, Macmillan, 1996), *Parsa* (NBT, 2000) and *Unhoye (The Survivors*, Katha, 2005) are also available in the English translations.

### **Gurdial Singh's Fiction in Perspective**

Much before we start making an assessment of Gurdial Singh's fiction, we need to put him, as well as his work, within the wider linguistic, historical and cultural frame to which he essentially belongs. Making a rather slow start, the novel, as we all know, began to emerge in the Punjabi language only in the latter half of the 19th century, and initially it developed largely in the shadows of its European counterpart. Bhai Vir Singh, one of its early practitioners, who was known primarily for his historical romances, sought inspiration in the fictional works of Walter Scott and his ilk.<sup>2</sup> Under the reformist influence of the Singh Sabha Movement, his successor Nanak Singh sought to break away from the imitative efforts, rooting the novel in the very soil and substance of Punjab. Turning to the indigenous modes of story-telling such as *quissas*, popular in the medieval period, Nanak Singh gave to the Punjabi novel a distinct local character and habitation. It was through his efforts that the novel managed to reclaim not only its vital link with the oral tradition, but also its soft, delicate formless texture. In his novels, fluidity of sentimentalism goes hand in hand with the ideology of a social reformer, something that Sohan Singh Seetal and Jaswant Singh Kanwal, who were to come later, also tried to emulate, fairly successfully.

Interestingly, it was in the Punjabi language that the *anchalik upnayas* (whose beginnings literary historians often trace back to Phaneshwar Nath Renu's Hindi novel *Maila Anchal*) made its appearance first of all. Kartar Singh Duggal's *Andraan*, a novel written in the Pothoari dialect and steeped in the localism of the same region, its geography, economy, ecology, customs and conventions, was published as far back as 1948. In a way, emergence of this particular form of novel did help in foregrounding hard-core social realism in the Punjabi novel, which was to acquire its ideological underpinnings from a curious blend of Marxist thought and Gandhian socialism. Sant Singh Sekhon, Surinder Singh Narula, Amrita Pritam and Narinder Pal Singh, among several others, made a consistent and significant contribution towards this paradigm shift. By enabling the fiction to shed its obsessive, maudlin sentimentality, even quasi-romantic character, these luminaries slowly but surely paved the way for the advent of a truly modernist novel in Punjabi, with a psychological/sociological thrust entirely its own.

Until the times of Gurdial Singh, two diametrically opposed ideologies viz., a brand of naïve romanticism and an indigenous form of realism had continued to exert pressures and counter-pressures upon the content and/or form of the Punjabi novel. Apart from these ideological tensions, which helped shape the aesthetic concerns as well as their articulation, Punjabi fiction had continued to shift back and forth between the rural and the urban, the past and the present, the poetic and the realistic. The historical importance of Gurdial Singh's fiction lies in the fact that it sought to encapsulate the dialectics of tradition and modernity, even tried to attain a rare synthesis of the two, wherever possible, something that had eluded Punjabi fiction until then. Conscious of his role in re-constituting the novelistic discourse, he ruptured the tradition of Punjabi novel from within, while continuing to nurture it from without. By pulling it out of the morass of bourgeois morality into which Punjabi novel had largely sunk in its post-Independence phase, he opened up possibilities that would have otherwise remained unrealized.

Though not strictly a proponent of *anchalik upnayas*, Gurdial Singh could very well be seen as an exponent of the regional novel in the sense in which Thomas Hardy and R.K. Narayan essentially were. In novel after novel, he has assiduously re-created a fictional replica of an insulated, self-enclosed, provincial world of the *Malwa* region, where he has lived all his life and whose dreams and desires, folklore and culture he best understands and empathizes with. Most of his novels seek to capture the distinctive flavour of the regional dialect and its linguistic angularities. Malwa comes alive in his novels both as a place in history and as a cultural metaphor. Its stubborn, unyielding land, sandy soil and prickly air, low-roofed mud houses and vast open fields, mingle and overlap with stifling caste prejudices and intriguing questions of land ownership/possession to create a befitting backdrop to this incomparable saga of human courage, resilience and sacrifice. However, the self-limiting nature of the Malwa region doesn't in any way prevent Gurdial Singh from giving an artistically wholesome expression to the complexities of life he has set out to explore.<sup>2</sup>

Gurdial Singh radicalised the Punjabi novel or re-inscribed its ideological and/or aesthetic space by infusing into it a new consciousness about the underprivileged and the oppressed. Commenting upon his first ever novel *Marhi Da Deeva*, published in 1964, Namwar Singh, an eminent Hindi critic, is believed to have said: 'When the novel was a dying art-form in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was Tolstoy's *War and Peace* that had resurrected faith in novel as a form. In a similar fashion, when in the Indian languages, novel was going through its worst ever crisis, Gurdial Singh's *Marhi Da Deeva* revitalized this form as only he could.'<sup>3</sup> The significance of *Marhi Da Deeva* lies in the fact that for the first time ever in the history of Punjabi fiction, a social and economic outcast, leaping out of his shadowy terrain, made it to the centrestage of fictionscape. While seeking to project the sufferings and agonies of the hopelessly marginalized individuals as well as social classes/castes in a rather involved manner, Gurdial Singh has never lost sight of the imaginative/creative demands of his own vocation as a novelist. Often seen as a proponent of hard-core social realism, he is equally at ease with the poetic, symbolic mode of expression, even structuring of his fiction.

His sternest critics also concede, unhesitatingly, that he did plough a fresh ground by turning novel into a trenchant critique of social discourse, without in any way compromising on its poeticity. Steeped in history without being explicitly historical, his fiction mediates its way through myriad, often disparate, crosscurrents of the mainstream and folk traditions of storytelling, latent in both orature and ecriture. Though he did radicalize the novel by infusing greater ideological strength and vitality into its content, at the formal level, he is neither an exhibitionist nor a maverick experimentalist.

Convinced that the form must ultimately follow the dictates of content, Gurdial Singh's favourite self-description, after Georg Lukacs' well-known phrase, is that of a 'critical realist.' Though there is an inherent organicity in all of his fictional work, he doesn't return to the treatment of the same subject or style, ever again. An inveterate progressive, he subscribes to the Darwinian notion of continuous, uninterrupted struggle with the environment and also to the positivism of the evolutionary principle minus its ruthless competitiveness, as much as his characters often do.

### **Gurdial Singh's Fiction: A Brief Overview**

In one of his novels, *Parsa*, a low-caste *siri*, Tindi, requests his benevolent master to tell him an 'interesting story.' On being asked as to what really makes for such a story, Tindi first hesitates and then shoots off a counter question: "Why are the stories always about kings and princes?"<sup>4</sup> More than a mere rhetorical question, it's the very *raison d'être* of Gurdial Singh's counter-narratives. He is no less than a messiah of the marginalized, who has consistently and tirelessly tried to put the dispossessed, the dislocated and the de-privileged on the centre map of his fiction. From a poor, illiterate farmhand, a small-time worker or a peasant to an overburdened rickshaw-puller or a low-

caste carpenter, it's always the primal rawness of human life that strikes a sympathetic chord in him.

Conceived as victims of social/historical tyranny, most of his characters fight back even in face of imminent defeat. He strongly believes that man's ultimate *dharma* is to fight the tyranny and oppression built into his/her own situation. This is what often imbues his characters, even his novels with a definite sense of tragic inevitability. And this tragic sense is certainly much more pronounced in his early novels such as *Marhi Da Deeva* (1964) and *Kuwela* (1968) than it is in his later works. While Jagseer in *Marhi Da Deeva* falls an easy prey to the machinations of a beguiling feudal power play, Heera Dei in *Kuwela* stands firm, refusing to cringe before a taboo-ridden society much too easily.

However, the heroic or revolutionary potential of his characters began to come fully into play only with the creation of Bishna in *Unhoye* (1966) and Moddan in *Addh Chanini Raat* (1972). Unlike Jagseer, both Bishna and Moddan not only refuse steadfastly to become accomplices in the process of their own marginalization but also make untiring efforts to rise in revolt against this process. They even go so far as to interrogate the dehumanising social/legal practices working against them, but stop short of overturning them. It's their lack of self-awareness that ultimately makes 'failed revolutionaries' out of them.

With *Parsa*, a Jat-Brahmin, moving centre-stage, the dialectics turns inwards. His consciousness becomes the ultimate battleground. For it is here that the social tensions and conflicts wage their most fierce and intense battle. Parsa seeks to overcome the tyranny of caste and class not through exclusion or rejection, but assimilation and inclusion. In his person, all forms of contradictions find a happy resolution. It's in recognition of this fact that *Parsa* (1991) has widely been acclaimed as an important cultural text, a real triumph of Gurdial Singh's life-long commitment to the art of fiction. For any writer to make an attempt to reclaim the diverse and complex strands of his cultural memory within the scope of a single work of fiction, and that too, with some measure of success, is, indeed, quite rare. And if such an example does exist in the contemporary Punjabi literature, it's Gurdial Singh's much-celebrated novel *Parsa*.

There is both a touch of authenticity and self-absorption about Gurdial Singh's ability to fashion a wide range of human characters. But he doesn't ever allow his interest in or sympathy for his character(s) to either overwhelm or undermine his primary commitment to the social concerns. For him, man is essentially a social and historical being. As a natural corollary, his characters remain intermediate agents, individualised yet typical concretisations of the context in which they live and operate.

Almost all his novels, without an exception, are set amid the shifting contours of the Malwa region whose economic backwardness sometimes obscures its cultural richness. What is significant is that despite his emphasis upon its local colours, sounds and smells, Malwa manages to become in his fiction a microcosm of the world within which a larger drama of human

existence plays itself out. Working within this framework, Gurdial Singh has managed to create richly evocative vignettes of rural life, complete with its distinctive code, its customs and conventions. Always alive to its throbbing pulse and rhythm, he sees a village not as static but an every-changing, dynamic unit. Often the trauma of change is chronicled with an unnerving sense of verisimilitude. It's the dialectics of tradition and modernity that tends to give an overarching expression to his insistent social concern.

*Marhi Da Deeva (The Last Flicker)* relocates the twin questions of ownership and dispossession within the ambit of the green revolution and redefines them. *Kuwela* probes into the problem of widow remarriage in an orthodox Hindu society. *Rete di ik Muthi* is a sensitive portrayal of how the blind pursuit of materialism leads to slow erosion of human values such as love and fidelity. *Anhe Ghore Da Daan* bemoans the loss of kinship culture, casting an oblique look at the issue of shrinking land-holding and attendant problems of forced migration, unemployment and destitution.

Set in pre-independent India, *Unhoye (The Survivors)* records the impact of early forays into industrialization with a rare precision, of how dehumanisation creeps in, almost imperceptibly. Unlike his other works *Parsa* is not so tangibly located in time-space continuum. As the main focus of the novel is on reclaiming the rich literary/cultural sources and history of Punjab, social reality impinges on it very marginally. It is almost as if, after having created the narratives of oppression in his earlier novels, in *Parsa*, Gurdial Singh finally breaks free, moving rather self-assuredly towards a narrative of emancipation. For those readers who have walked with him through the fire and brimstone of inferno that Jagseer, Moddan or Bishna live through, *Parsa* brings the ultimate, much-awaited Dantesque vision of *Paradiso*.

Even when he does portray social reality in all its searing passion, as he does in his earlier novels, he takes care not to ever allow it to become either morbid or squeamish. A certain degree of poeticity helps him in smoothing out the jagged edges of social reality. All his novels function the way poetic metaphors do. Loaded with rich cultural signification, the titles such as *Marhi Da Deeva*, *Rete Di IK Muthi*, *Addh Chanini Raat* et al sometimes acquire a suggestive power far beyond their immediate context. It's his poetic vision, which ultimately liberates, offering a transcendent edge to everything he so feelingly portrays.

Gurdial Singh's creative imagination is imbued with a rare sense of synthesising power. Like a true artist, he understands the dilemmas and conflict of both art and life exceedingly well. No wonder, his poetic effusions go so well with a restrained expression and an economy of detail. He is a minimalist in the true sense of the word, as he manages to make it not just an expression of his style; rather the very texture of his vision and thought. No wonder, he is able to strike a precarious, though fine balance between the narrative and the dramatic, the personal and the historical, the political and the artistic.

Nowhere does it become more conspicuous than in his all-enveloping view of life. On being asked about it once, Gurdial Singh is reported to have

quipped, 'Had I not taken to writing, I would have probably exploded. So, my life-view is nothing if not tragic.'<sup>5</sup> For him, tragedy is not a by-product of a fortuitous set of circumstances or an ingrained personal failing. It is immanent in the very condition of being human or rather becoming so, result of a constant dialectical struggle between the two. It is an expression, even a triumphant assertion of man's unending search for the classical values of honour, dignity and self-respect. Such a view of life confers no heroism; it can't even induce despair or defeatism.

In novel after novel, Gurdial Singh succeeds in renewing our faith in the irrepressible spirit of human nature and the undying power of human endurance. On being asked, how he felt on receiving *Jnanpith*, the most coveted literary award, he is believed to have said, 'It's recognition of those who live in my pages.'<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, only Gurdial Singh could have justifiably made such a claim. In his case, *Jnanpith* is not just a personal triumph of an individual, but of all those who are still fighting rather desperately for the retrieval of honour and dignity that history has stoutly denied to them through the ages.

### **Cultural Memory as an Alterity**

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, one thing is quite clear that though Gurdial Singh may be said to belong to the mainstream tradition of the Punjabi novel, all along, his novels have synergized this tradition from below. Rather than function within the restrictive framework of the dominant tradition, he has constantly interrogated, even subverted and deconstructed it from the perspective of folk traditions residing in the popular consciousness. Rejecting the conventional notion of official, monumental historiography, all along, he has strongly advocated and subscribed to the notion of the worm's eye view of history. Often the representations of cultural history or the folk representations within the dominant tradition are seen in terms of alterity, which challenges the conventional notions of chronological, linear, and dominant history or the discourse constituted by it. Not only does Gurdial Singh locate his narratives within the larger space of cultural history, but he also posits 'cultural memory,'<sup>7</sup> an alterity within the framework of cultural history, as the basic trope for constructing his novels. In several of his novels, including *Parsa*, cultural memory functions as the basic structuring device for constituting a discourse that runs counter to the dominant discourse(s).

The notion of 'cultural memory' emerged in the social sciences in the wake of the World War II and the horrors of Nazism or the untold sufferings of the Jews in Germany.<sup>8</sup> It is only when the fragmented or fragmentary accounts of the holocaust began to emerge out of the persecuted minority of Jews who survived its horrors that 'cultural memory' became a worthwhile area of investigation for the social scientists. To this extent, it would not be wrong to say that the notion of 'cultural memory' is implicated in a definitive sense of historical consciousness. Often seen as a reaction against systematic, willful attempts of official, monumental historiography to suppress the historical

memories, especially of a very brutal, inhuman nature, it takes on the form of dialectics of 'remembering and forgetting', as has been emphasized by Jen Brockmeier.<sup>9</sup> He goes on to suggest that 'in this discourse, narrative practices are of central importance because they combine various cultural symbol systems, integrating them within one symbolic space.' According to him, three narrative orders i.e., 'the linguistic, semiotic and performative or discursive of any artwork' are examined as these 'constitute a mnemonic system, a symbolic space of remembering and forgetting in which the time orders of past and present are continuously recombined'.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the cultural memory is said to operate in all those cultures and communities where people have either been oppressed and subjected to the process of willful suppression, or where the complex processes of hegemonic control and subsequent 'cultural repression' or 'amnesia' have taken place. If seen from this perspective, cultural memory may be perceived as an attempt to come to terms with the repressed contents and/or processes of history and is necessitated by the reclamation of subjectivity, which is threatened with extinction, especially in face of multiple historical oppressions. The extent to which 'cultural memory' plays a decisive role in the restitution or reclamation of subjectivity, it could be said to become complicit with the process of identity-formation or identity-construction, too.<sup>11</sup> It's another matter that this process of identity formation is recapitulated through a notion of history, which is not only unconventional but also pre-supposes a non-linear, discontinuous, non-chronological and anti-authoritarian representation. It is precisely this notion that Foucault supports when he refers to the discontinuous processes of history or points toward the presence of the significant gaps, silences and fissures in our reading of history.<sup>12</sup> To put it somewhat differently, cultural memory could be said to reside in those fissures, gaps and silences or in the residual elements where the history could be said to deconstruct itself. For this reason, its reclamation is possible only through such non-hierarchical, cultural sources as folk stories, songs, or little narratives of the people as opposed to the grand, universalizing narratives of the big and the powerful. In other words, the ideology behind this process of reclaiming 'cultural memory' is definitely anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalistic, anti-imperialistic and anti-hegemonic. To put it somewhat differently, 'cultural memory' constitutes a counter-hegemonic discourse, which tends to interrogate and subvert the assumptions of cultural dominance and hegemony operating within a culture.

It also needs to be pointed out that despite all its individualistic articulations, cultural memory, often enough, is as intensely personal as it is representatively communal or collective.<sup>13</sup> It essentially posits a situation where the distinction between 'individual memory' and 'collective memory' ceases to exist, as the individual is necessarily seen only as a carrier of the cultural code of 'collective memories'. Not only do the cultural memories reside inside an individual, but they also manifest themselves in and through the life-processes of an individual. As the novel often deals with the fate and fortunes of the individual characters, it has the potential to turn into an extremely fascinating site for the reclamation of cultural memory. It is as

though the past becomes a living reality or entity, with its present-ness becoming a pre-text for both what is 'remembered' as much as what is conveniently 'forgotten'. In other words, the novel becomes an archeology of hidden as well as revealed knowledge about the past or its continued, everlasting presence.

Apart from its present-ness, another fact that needs to be stressed in relation to the fictional representation of cultural memory is that, being what it is, memory often displays a characteristic tendency for a 'spill-over effect.' Not only do the memories tend to constantly elide, and go through the process of slippage (also called forgetting), but often display an equally strong tendency for simply running through the butter fingers. This is precisely why it almost becomes imperative for a fictional work dealing with cultural memories to take recourse to the framing device for structuring the events, situations and anecdotes, which can only be perceived or read, if effectively framed. The framing device marks off the boundaries of human memory, provides space for the diversified, rich material, and also provides the 'archival traces' through which memories become recognizable, identifiable, and even decipherable. It is for this reason that sometimes such narratives are also known as the 'Narratives of Recovery',<sup>14</sup> as Marita Sturken suggests through her catchphrase.

#### ***Parsa*: A Significant Cultural Text**

Having provided the context, we can now consider the question of how and in what different ways Gurdial Singh's novel *Parsa* could be perceived as an effective site for the cultural memory of its people, their poetry, language and history. Before we lay out our case in this regard, first and foremost, it is important to see how *Parsa* is completely different from the other novels of Gurdial Singh, and why it must be looked upon as a significant cultural text. Unlike the other novels of Gurdial Singh, *Parsa* operates simultaneously within a dual frame of time and space, that is, the narrative time-space and the comic or eternal/epic time-space. *Parsa*, the main protagonist, lives at two different levels at the same time, moving freely from one end of the spectrum to another, without much ado. In other words, if the other novels of Gurdial Singh bear the burden of history and its multiple oppressions, *Parsa* seeks to create its own logic of emancipation or liberation. If in the other novels, his main purpose is to create the 'narratives of oppression,' in *Parsa*, he is certainly in a far more transgressive mode as he manages to create here, what one may only describe as, a 'narrative of liberation.' This fact has certainly been lost on a number of Punjabi critics who have consistently failed to see this significant paradigm shift in Gurdial Singh's novelistic discourse and continue to insist upon reading *Parsa* as an extension of much of his earlier novels. Put simply, their readings of Gurdial Singh fail to respond to the cultural specificities of *Parsa* as much as they fail to take cognizance of the novel's epical scale and the vast, panoramic view it offers of Punjab's cultural history. Though there are basic stylistic, formal, artistic and ideological



differences between the two novels, *Parsa* tends to become a cultural text in the same sense in which Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a cultural text. Both the novelists, it seems, are seeking to excavate their respective cultural situations within a definitive historical/cultural frame. In this kind of fiction, the novelist's concern is not so much with a specific period in history as it is with the whole range of cultural history of a specific culture. As authorized versions of history are neither documented nor reproduced, but systematically challenged and interrogated within the fiction space, such type of fiction allows for only an indirect mediation of history.

### ***Parsa*: A Site of Cultural Memory**

The cultural frame of this novel *Parsa* begins to define itself the moment we start exploring the rich significance of its innocuous looking title. The title easily reminds us of a mythological character Parshu Rama, who was born a Brahmin and who had declared himself to be the sworn enemy of the Khshatriyas, having taken this deadly vow to eliminate all Khshatriyas from the face of this earth.<sup>15</sup> At this juncture, one may just as well ask oneself: Why is Gurdial Singh extending the cultural frame of his novel beyond history, into the realm of mythology and folklore? To put it simply, he is setting up a frame within which cultural history becomes not just an alterity, but perhaps the only discourse available within the novel. Moreover, it has definite implications for his characterization of Parsa, who has been conceived as a complex figure, a product of both mythology and history, a Brahmin by birth and a land-owning Jat by profession. In fact, it is by invoking this context that Gurdial Singh is able to reconstruct a specific notion of the cultural history of Punjab, within which crossing over of the boundaries of caste is as real as is the transgression of the boundaries of discourse. For it is only within such a frame that Gurdial Singh can possibly situate or locate his vision of syncretism of the Punjabi traditions, where the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh identities are not constituted separately, but are caught up in a melee of time and history, constantly shaping and re-shaping each other.<sup>16</sup>

### **Cultural Memory and Individual Identity**

In more ways than one, Parsa, the main protagonist has been presented as both a witness to the processes of history and as an active participant in them, both as a worthy inheritor of the cultural memory and tradition, and also its worst denouncer and critic. This kind of dichotomy is built into the very conception of Parsa's character, and is evident in the way in which he is located, not in the actual physical, social or moral space but instead within the plural, folk and amoral cultural space, where the rigid caste boundaries of Jat-Brahmin are as irrelevant as are the material and historical contingencies of his situation. The point that Gurdial Singh is making here is simple enough. He thus manages to establish the fact that the cultural history neither supports nor legitimizes the whole idea of caste-divisions, which in any case, has become irrelevant and

unsustainable. The sociology of such caste-distinctions in our contemporary society, he appears to be suggesting, is far more complex than is often realized.<sup>17</sup> As the division of labour and the principle of specialization have now long ceased to be the determining factors, there is much greater intra-mobility between and across the different caste-formations in an Indian/Punjabi situation than is widely accepted. And it is this kind of interpenetration of the caste boundaries that allows Parsa the advantage of the proverbial Brahmanical memory (which is traditionally regarded as the result of a long established practice of memorizing the *Vedas*, but in his case, is the result of his inheritance of the eclectic folk tradition of Sufism), and also his Jat-like inherent rebelliousness, non-conformism, and almost intransigent, self-willed rigidity. If Parsa refuses to live by any code other than the one he defines, it is only because he posits himself outside the framework of conventional social morality. His refusal to accept or honour any social, moral or religious code is what testifies to his status as an archetypal rebel, an eternal outsider, who lives life purely on his own terms.

There is another aspect of Parsa's character that deserves a somewhat closer scrutiny and attention. Though he has had no formal or informal education as such, it appears, as though the entire folk tradition not only lives inside him but is also readily available to him at recall. In his moments of intense pain or joy, he often breaks forth into snatches of poetry that he has neither heard nor read. Only on closer scrutiny do we discover that what he often sings rather unconsciously are but the eternal words of Farid, Guru Nanak, Bulleh Shah or Waris Shah et al., of course, sung in a highly inflected, even conflated style. Significantly, his attempts at reclaiming cultural memory are intensely personal as he often plays his own variations on the songs of the Sufi poets, who constitute, as it were, the most precious collective heritage of the Punjabis, even today. If there is any religion Parsa either believes in or subscribes to, it is the all embracing mysticism of a Sufi, who looks upon both life and death, with much the same unconcern, indifference and detachment. On the occasion of his wife's premature death, he performs her cremation without much fuss, blatantly refusing to go through a set of rituals or ceremonies, none of which he personally believes in. Though he brings up his three sons single-handedly, he neither has great expectations of them nor does he try to control or run their lives in any way. Initially, when his elder sons leave him one by one, he simply acquiesces, and refuses to even lodge personal protest with either of them. Later, when his youngest son, Basanta, joins in with the Naxalites and leaves home, he makes no effort whatsoever to either wean him away or dissuade him. On learning of Basanta's death later in police custody, he remains impassive, going through all the formalities as if it were someone else's tragedy. This is not to suggest that in Parsa, Gurdial Singh has created an emotionally vapid or an atrophied character, someone who is reminiscent of Meursault in Albert Camus' *The Outsider*. Much less than that, Gurdial has, in fact, bestowed this character with so much of emotional plenitude and richness that he only thinks it is worthwhile to invest his emotion, not squander it away. That he is both capable of emotional

plenitude and rich investments is evident from the way in which he goes about taking moral responsibility, initially for Mukhtiar Kaur and then their young son, though he could have easily discarded them both. His decision to pick up threads and start life all over again with Savitri and the son he had through Mukhtiar Kaur, is a fair testimony to his personal philosophy of life, which demands that human beings, too, must seek renewal and reconstruction almost as naturally as does nature. He sees no contradiction between the human and the natural worlds, and his acceptance of life as well as destiny essentially springs from this kind of understanding he has.

### **Cultural Memory and State Repression**

The Punjab has had a long and established history of state repression, the earliest recorded memories of which easily go back to the Mughals, who invaded this territory, and continue well through the later phases when the British finally managed to occupy this terrain in 1849.<sup>16</sup> There is a certain view of Punjab's history which claims that even in the post-Independence phase there has hardly been any let up or extenuation of the circumstances. It is believed by some that the process of state repression only became much worse, even more subversive after India became a free nation, as now it was practiced by our own people, not the foreigners or the cultural outsiders. Regardless of whether or not we go along with this view of the Punjab's history, the fact remains that in the post-Independence phase, Punjab has witnessed a number of ideologically driven movements such as the Naxalite movement of the 1960s, supported by the hard-core Marxist ideology, the movement for the creation of Punjabi Subha, again supported by a political outfit called the Akalis, and a more militant movement of the 1980s, supported by the hardliners and terrorists among the Sikh nationalist organizations. One way or the other, it is this long history of state repression that has led to the suppression of the people's history and its fissured contents. Though Gurdial Singh has purposively not located his novel *Parsa* in a specific time-space continuum or historical context, he has imbued his narrative with non-linear, non-chronological sense of historical consciousness, which becomes *inter alia*, a form of folk, cultural history. While no specific references have been made to the Naxalite movement of the 1960s, the entire context is poetically evoked through Basanta's involvement and complicity with it. The entire history of how the young boys, especially from the rural background initially jumped on to this bandwagon, faced police atrocities and custodial deaths, before the movement began to die down, having lost its ideological impetus and credibility, has been captured in *Parsa* with sure, almost deft strokes. However, it is not too difficult to see where the personal sympathies of the novelist essentially belong, provided we understand the absorption with which he has created the character of Master, the main ideologue. Gurdial Singh does understand that though this movement may have largely failed to realize its socio-economic objectives of social justice and/or a more equitable re-distribution of land among the landless, it certainly did leave behind a very

rich legacy of poetry that can hardly be ever ignored. To an extent, *Parsa's* poetic inheritance spreads as far back as Farid and Guru Nanak on the one hand, and Shiv Batalvi, Surjit Pattar and Paash, on the other. In other words, in his attempts at recovering the cultural memory, Gurdial abolishes the facetious distinction between the poetic and the political, which, in any case, doesn't seem to exist at the ground level of popular consciousness.

### **Cultural Memory and Fictive Time/Space Consciousness**

As already pointed out, the time-space frame of *Parsa* has been very carefully crafted and structured. Unlike other novels of Gurdial Singh, this particular novel is strategically set within the dual time-frame, with Parsa moving freely between these two disparate, unrelated time-zones, also serving as an important connecting link between the two. I may emphasize here that I'm not using this notion of double time-frame in the sense in which it has been used by Christian Metz, but essentially in the sense in which T.S. Eliot has used it in his famous play *Murder in the Cathedral*.<sup>18</sup> Christian Metz says, "Narrative is a ...doubly temporal sequence.... There is the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative (the time of the signified and the time of the signifier).

This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives...More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme."<sup>19</sup> However, T.S. Eliot re-conceptualizes it in terms of 'temporality' and 'timelessness'. On the one hand, Gurdial Singh is concerned about the notion of temporality and so Parsa is made to function within the specificities of time, place and action. On the other, he also realizes that there is another, perhaps more significant trans-human, trans-historical, cosmic dimension of 'time' as well. It is the recognition of this time-scale that gives to the novel a transcendent character and sweep, transforming it from just another folk narrative into a significant cultural text. As far as the conception of the novelistic space is concerned, it has been conceived in both the terms; the real, sociological/cultural as well as the poetic, psychological. While the sociological dimension of space is reflected in the way in which linearity of the narrative is emphasized, its psychological dimension is reflected in the way linearity is disrupted, giving it a transcendent sweep of space and history. Parsa lives at the conjunction of these two distinctive time-space conceptions, almost at the same time. It is in this sense that his consciousness becomes the ultimate battleground for mediating the eternal dilemmas of man in relation to other men, time, history and also timelessness. It's here that the entire game of cultural memory, polarized by the two extremes of 'remembering and forgetting,' 'amnesia and recovery' is played out. As memory fails to follow the predictable pattern of linearity, so the narrative, too, doesn't organise itself in accordance with the principle of linearity.

This might create an impression that the narrative is 'focalized' in Parsa's consciousness, which it is not. Though Gurdial Singh has primarily used the technique of 'third person narrator' throughout, he has refused to privilege a

particular viewpoint, a definitive perspective or a dominant ideology. This is achieved in a variety of ways. First, he uses a number of framing devices which lend a definite degree of clinical objectivity to his narration. Besides, we don't always view the situations or incidents only through the eyes of Parsa. Not only do the strands of 'focalization' keep shifting in the narrative, but the vulnerability of Parsa's point of view is also constantly exposed through the dogged refusal of his sons, Jetha and Pohla, to fall in line with him or Basanta's choice to lead a life his father wouldn't have ever approved of. In more ways than one, both Basanta, his youngest son, and Tindi, his siri, become not just the commentators, but virtually the surrogate protagonists of this story, too. Tindi's relationship with Parsa is vaguely reminiscent of Lear's relationship with Fool in *King Lear*. It is through the mediation of Tindi, who represents the fascinating world of folk stories, folk songs and folk wisdom (which is what Parsa shares with him often) that Gurdial Singh deconstructs both history and dominant ideology.<sup>20</sup> Going far beyond his expectations, it is Tindi who proves to be much more than a son to Parsa, something he hadn't ever imagined. His acceptance of Tindi toward the end of the novel marks an important stage in the ultimate integration of his individual/collective psyche. This is how he manages to synthesise the residual, vestigial element of 'lowliness' into his supposedly "high and mighty" Brahmanical self.

A number of Punjabi critics have denounced *Parsa* on the grounds that here Gurdial Singh has abandoned his critical concern for the dispossessed and the marginalized, and somehow become trapped in the numbo-jumbo of such abstractions as *karma*, *dharma* and/or man's relationship with nature.<sup>21</sup> No doubt, Gurdial Singh initially built his reputation by churning out, one after another, the 'narratives of oppression,' and by so doing, also succeeded in exorcizing his impinging sense of socio-economic oppression that rattled him through his youth and middle-age. In *Parsa*, he has created a novel that transcends the narrow boundaries of caste and class, dominant and marginalized, high and low, and moves toward a more integrated vision of human consciousness, where the dualities of all kind simply cease to exist. It is important to stress here that Gurdial Singh's vision is not located so much in the exclusionary or dominant Hindu view of life or Sankara's philosophy of monism, as much as it is within the eclectic and egalitarian notion of Sufi mysticism, popular in folk consciousness.

### **Cultural Memory and Narrative Framing**

It has already been suggested earlier that the cultural memory necessarily needs the mediation of a framing device, if the 'spill-over' is to be avoided and its encryption is to be successfully realized. Conscious of this fact, Gurdial Singh has used a framing device for structuring a variety of incidents and situations in this novel. For instance, there is a kind of pattern that runs through Parsa's life, as is evident from the way in which an incident involving his father Sarupa is narrated right in the beginning. To an extent, this is primarily to suggest that Parsa is the inheritor of his 'karmic destiny' as much

as he is a victim of a curse his family is afflicted with. Like his father, Parsa, too, gets embroiled in a physical fight and emerges triumphant, and like so many of his ancestors, he, too, is condemned to become a widower at a relatively young age and bring up his children single-handed. It goes to the credit of Gurdial Singh that he manages to create a narrative that doesn't simply legitimize this pattern of life but breaches it, as it were, thus creating unimaginable possibilities for Parsa's vertical growth in the process.

Another framing device used very effectively in the novel is the story-within-a-story kind of a frame, essentially a carryover from *The Mahabharata* and *The Panchtantra Tales*. It is no coincidence that the novel opens with a *Pauranik* tale about Hiranyakashyapa, the legendary demon-king, who was Prahlad's father, and was ultimately killed by Narsingha, one of the incarnations of Vishnu.<sup>22</sup> Thus by framing the narrative with this mythological story, Gurdial Singh not only manages to extend the context of his novel beyond history, but also invokes a shared cultural context within which the moral problems confronting the characters must be examined. In the immediate context, it offers a moral twist to the fight that first Sarupa and then Parsa puts up for the vindication of personal valour and honour, and later, it becomes a metonymic frame for the moral choices other characters such as Jetha, Pohla and Basanta make from time to time. Put simply, if Gurdial Singh has created any specific moral frame for judging or evaluating the actions or deeds of his characters, it is defined only in terms of various tales, mythological or folk, he insinuates into the narrative, time and again. For instance, much before Parsa comes into contact with Mukhtiar Kaur and enters into a physical relationship with her, we have a folk-tale framing the entire incident and guiding our moral perceptions, too. It is the tale of a physically strong young man who refuses to gratify the carnal needs of a married young girl (who approaches him for this purpose), simply on the grounds that she belongs to another man. What he fails to realize is that her husband, being mentally retarded, is unable to fulfil her needs. Going beyond the commonsensical, sociological view of morality, Gurdial Singh explores its trans-human, cosmic dimensions, by suggesting that a seeker in one situation could also be a giver in another. This is what the folk tale essentially demonstrates when the same young man has to beg that very woman for the sweat off her palms to get his skin-rash healed. It is obvious that Gurdial Singh would not like us to judge Parsa-Mukhtiar Kaur episode from the standpoint of conventional or commonsensical view of morality. Nothing that Parsa ever does actually fits into the frame of ordinary logic. It is only by defying this logic of conventionality that he manages to liberate himself from the self-limiting constraints of ordinariness that often chain us down to our own small dreams, desires and fears. No wonder, despite being a householder, he is shown miles ahead of a sadhu he meets in Haridwar. If Parsa is able to acquire a larger than life stature towards the end of the novel, towering far above the level of the ordinary mortals and dwarfing virtually every other character in the novel, it is only because he shows innate strength and courage in defying

all the given frames, and displays almost existential doggedness in accepting the consequences of his own actions and choices.

Gurdial Singh's purpose in using the device of a framed tale is two-fold; to provide a frame within which a vast repertoire of cultural memories can be contained and to create a character who ultimately transgresses all frames and grows beyond them. In the person of Parsa, he has certainly created such a character. And by using the stories (drawn mostly from the folk tradition) for framing the incidents and situations, Gurdial Singh allows the reader the freedom to interpret the novel, without the mediation of the narrator or the author. It is in this double sense that *Parsa*, the novel and the character, tend to become what I earlier described as the 'narrative of liberation or emancipation.'

### Conclusion

To conclude, one may say that in *Parsa*, Gurdial Singh has managed to create the narrative space within which cultural memory/history and/or caste hierarchies can effectively be subjected to a process of re-negotiation. Here I am not using the term 'narrative' in its more specialized sense in which it is often used in 'Narratology,' but in its most generalized sense where it is considered almost co-terminus with the novel. Though the novel has traditionally been seen as a sociological tract, over the years, there has been a definitive change in our perception of its role and function. The novel is no longer seen only as a form of representation in the modernist or the pre-modernist sense, but is increasingly perceived as a self-reflexive genre, with a specific archaeological function of digging into the past. However, this archaeological digging into the past is somewhat different from its engagement with history (which gave rise to the historical novel per se), as it liberates it from the well-defined, structured notions of reality, representation and fixed notion of identity. Now, that the structured notions of reality and fiction have collapsed, 'fictive space' has concomitantly, re-negotiated its internal structure, as also its modes of representation. In fact, it has now ceased to be a 'space' and has instead become a 'site' both for the inscription and the excavation of personal/cultural memory and/or history. To an extent, this is what has now made the novel into a 'site' for the contestation of multiple ideologies, which is what *Parsa*, too, tends to become, fairly successfully.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, trans., by A. D. Lindsay, (London: The David Campbell Publishers Ltd., 1992), pp. 282-286. Though Plato introduces this comparison between the painter/poet and carpenter in these specific pages of Book X, it constitutes part of his much larger discussion on the Theory of Forms, which he develops through *The Republic*.

<sup>2</sup> This entire discussion derives itself from my reading of several histories of the Punjabi literature. However, the section on Gurdial Singh is based upon my reading of his work. For more comprehensive analysis, see Kartar Singh Duggal and Sant Singh Sekhon (1992), *A History of Punjabi Literature*, (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi).

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in the postscript to Gurdial Singh's *Marhi Da Deewa*, (Chandigarh: Lokgeet Prakashan), p. 167. Though the original quotation is in Hindi, it has been reproduced in the text in Punjabi and the English translation in this case, as in several other similar cases, is mine.

<sup>4</sup> Gurdial Singh, *Parsa*, trans., Rana Nayar, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2000) p. 242.

<sup>5</sup> As quoted to the author in an interview published in *The Tribune*, Sunday Reading, June 16, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted to the author in an unpublished, personal interview.

<sup>7</sup> 'Cultural Memory' is a concept introduced to the archaeological disciplines by Jan Assmann who defines it 'as the outer dimension of human memory' embracing two different concepts: 'memory culture' (*Erinnerungskultur*) and 'reference to the past' (*Vergangenheitsbezug*). Memory culture is the process by which a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving, with the help of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for the next generations to *reconstruct* their cultural identity. When we speak about cultural memory, 'we are including in this definition two distinct characteristics: (1) the survival of a historically, politically and socially marginalized group of people, and (2) the role of spirituality as a form of resistance.' (p. 1). As Jan Assmann's writings are mostly in the German language and are not available directly, I have accessed his ideas through Jeanette Rodriguez & Ted Fortier's book. For detailed exposition of the concept, see, Jeanette Rodriguez & Ted Fortier (2007), *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith & Identity*, (Austin: University of Texas Press). For the relationship between the individual and the social memory, see, Paul Connerton (1989), *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). And for the relationship between cultural memory, narrative framing and identity, see, Lewis P. Hinchman, Sandra K. Hinchman (eds.) (2001), *Memory, Identity, Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*, (New York: State university of New York Press), and Introduction by Mieke Bal in Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe & Leo Spitzer (eds.) (1999), *Acts of Memory: Cultural recall in the Present*, (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press).

<sup>8</sup> This fact has been stated by Jeanette Rodriguez & Ted Terrier in their Preface (ix-x) to the book quoted above, and has also been corroborated by Michael Stewart in his article quoted below.

<sup>9</sup> 'Memory and Forgetting' are the twin processes that Jen Brockmierer associates with 'Cultural Memory.' My understanding of this concept is



borrowed from a secondary source as Brockmierer's essays are, once again, available only in the German language, so I'm reproducing Jen Brockmierer as he is quoted by Michal Stewart (September 2004), in 'Remembering without Commemoration: The Mnemonics and Politics of Holocaust Memories among European Roma' *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, pp. 561-582.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 568.

<sup>11</sup> In their book, Dan Ben-Amos & Liliane Weissberg have sought to explore this relationship between cultural memory and identity-formation. See, Dan Ben-Amos & Liliane Weissberg (1999), *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, (Michigan: Wayne State University).

<sup>12</sup> Though Foucault was not a professional historian, he has done much to alter our perception of both history and historiography in recent times. Challenging the conventional notions of history as a chronological sequencing of events, he has emphasized, in the manner of a true post-structuralist, discontinuous, fragmented, fissured and subterranean notion of history. It is this kind of history that he often excavated in most of his works. In a way, all his works are explorations of the counter-hegemonic discourse of history, attempts to create alternative histories, be it of sexuality, social practices, legal system or madness. For detailed discussion, see, Michel Foucault (2002), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London & New York: Routledge).

<sup>13</sup> For cultural memory being, at once, an expression of collective as well as individual articulation, see, Paul Connerton (1989), *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>14</sup> Marita Sturken, 'Narratives of Recovery: Repressed Memory as Cultural Memory', in Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe & Leo Spitzer (eds.), (1999) *Acts of Memory: Cultural recall in the Present*, (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press).

<sup>15</sup> Parashurama is believed to be the sixth avatar of Vishnu, born in the Tretayuga to a Brahmin father, Jamadagni, and a Kshatriya mother, Renuka. Parashu means 'axe' in Sanskrit, hence the name Parashurama literally means 'Rama with the axe'. He is believed to have received an axe after undertaking an extended *tapasya* (penance) to please Shiva, the tribal deity, from whom he learned the methods of warfare and other skills. He fought the advancing ocean back thus saving the lands of Konkan and Malabar. Parashurama is said to be a Brahmakshatriya ('warrior Brahman'), the first warrior-saint. His mother was a descendant of the Kshatriya Suryavansha clan that ruled Ayodhya to which Rama also belonged. Once, when Parashurama returned home, he found his mother crying hysterically. When asked why she was crying, she said his father had been killed mercilessly by Kartavirya Arjuna. She beat her chest 21 times in sorrow and grief at her husband's death. In a rage, Parashurama vowed to exterminate the world's Haihaya-Kshatriyas 21 times. He killed the entire clan of Kartavirya Arjuna (or Sahasrarjuna), thus conquering the entire earth, and then conducted the Ashvamedha sacrifice. The Ashvamedha demanded

that the kings either submit to Parashurama's imperial position or thwart the sacrifice by defeating him in battle. They did neither and were killed. Parashurama exterminated the world's Haihaya-Kshatriyas 21 times, thus fulfilling his vow. Several accounts of Parashurama's legend are to be found in *The Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavat Purana*. According to some stories available in the Punjabi folk-lore, when Guru Gobind Singh baptized the Sikhs, he was reviving the tradition of Parashurama (warrior-saint). It is for this reason that Gurdial Singh has returned to this story in his novel *Parsa* and used it to look at the dissolution of caste-divisions and the emergence of Brahmin-Jat (Hindu-Sikh) hybridity in the Punjabi culture.

<sup>16</sup> There are two ways in which History of the Punjab has been reconstructed so far; as a separatist discourse and as a shared, syncretic discourse. Over the years, attempts have been made either by the Sikh historians or the sectarian historians to construct a Sikh history of the Punjab or a community-oriented history of the Punjab. Such attempts only seek to appropriate history to build or project either the majoritarian or a minoritarian discourse. Such historical constructions have fuelled communal passions and created divisions and fissures within the communities living in the Punjab, even outside. Of late, there have been attempts, endorsed, of course, by the Cambridge School of Historians, to project History of the Punjab as History of the Jats living in Punjab. All such exercises in historical constructions are, apparently, exclusionary in nature and are not only hegemonic but also politically motivated, even biased. On the other hand, a small band of historians continue to emphasize the spirit of Punjabiya in their constructions, and have managed to resurrect the spirit of commonality, mutuality and multiple identities that are so important for the preservation of our common heritage and principles. One of the ways in which all such notions of official, hegemonic historical constructions can possibly be challenged is by re-constructing or resurrecting the narratives of cultural history and/or cultural memory, for which there is no better form available to us than fiction itself. This explains Gurdial Singh's emphasis on cultural memory and mine as well.

<sup>17</sup> The caste-divisions enunciated by the *Manusmriti* and blindly superimposed on the Indian society for centuries now stand invalidated, even defeated, by the historical experience, as people in contemporary times, no longer follow the profession appropriate to their caste or even their parents' caste. One may hear of a Brahmin following the profession of a farmer/peasant/Jat, as is the case in this particular novel or a Khatriya sustaining himself through Brahmanical profession of teaching. This is how the rigid caste-boundaries have collapsed and consequently, a new sociology of Punjabi culture has emerged. Over a period of time, this new sociology, which draws its strength from the collapse of traditional/conservative caste-divisions, and also throws up renewed consciousness of the caste structures, has emerged. Though there is growing recognition that the rigid caste-distinctions are no longer either possible or sustainable, there are also growing efforts at articulating these caste-divisions

in social and political discourse. It is this kind of sociology that lies at the heart of Punjabi life and culture and Gurdial Singh has merely represented its many configurations in his several works of fiction.

<sup>18</sup> In his play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, T S Eliot has used a dual time-scheme to present his dramatic action. The play functions both in the temporal (material) and timeless (spiritual) worlds at the same time, as Thomas Beckett, the protagonist, freely moves in and out of these two worlds throughout the play. My understanding is that Gurdial Singh has also conceived the action of the novel at two levels, much in the way as Eliot has done.

<sup>19</sup> Christian Metz (1974), *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema*, trans., Michael Taylor (New York, 1974), p.18.

<sup>20</sup> Parsa is not a hero in the conventional sense, as he consistently refuses to fit into all our known constructions of a hero. If at all, he can be regarded as a hero, he can be regarded as a folk-hero, who inhabits 'timeless cultural space,' moves freely across the two regions, material and spiritual, and has this uncanny advantage (which no other character of Gurdial Singh seems to enjoy), of being able to observe this world from below as well as above, to feel the anguish of the common man and yet look at his mundane activities with a degree of transcendence. It is by positioning his narrative within this cultural space of the folklore and tradition that Gurdial manages to critique social, political and cultural distortions of his times, so incisively. This also enables him to deconstruct all possible hegemonic constructions and dominant ideologies operating within the Punjabi society/culture.

<sup>21</sup> On the publication of *Parsa*, a good number of Punjabi critics were extremely unhappy, even disillusioned with Gurdial Singh, for they felt that in this particular work he had abandoned his Marxist perspective and was sliding into the insidious trap of 'karma-dharma' (most of which not only constitutes the main ideological bulwark of the novel, but also the central theme of the multiple discussions Parsa and Pala *Raagi* engage in), he had scrupulously eschewed all his life. They even saw negation of his own Marxist philosophy and ideology in the conception of Parsa. They were equally resentful of the fact that he had chosen to present a Brahmin and not a *Shudra* as his main protagonist. Often, what is not understood by these critics is that Parsa has been conceived on an epic scale as someone who inheres in his person the entire cultural history (the shared and not the separatist one) of the Punjab. They also fail to see that the dialogue between Parsa and Pala *Raagi* is more in the nature of an internal dialogue, a dialogue between the lower and the higher self, a dialogue between a Brahmin and Sikh peasant, a dialogue between the two discourses they represent. In the person of Parsa, both the aspects of Punjabi culture, knowledge and action, material and spiritual, find the best ever articulation that we have ever had in the Punjabi literature. The novel *Parsa* deals as much with man's relationship with social, economic and political environment as it does with his relationship with forces like faith, destiny, nature and spirituality.

<sup>22</sup> Just as Gurdial Singh has used the legend of Parashurama in the title of his novel, he starts off his narrative by referring to the story of Hiranyakashyap. According to a story from *Bhagavata Purana*, The Four Kumaras, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanatkumara who were the manasaputras of *Brahma* (sons born from the mind or thought power of *Brahma*), visited Vaikuntha - the abode of *Vishnu*, to see him. Due to the strength of their *tapas*, the four Kumaras appeared to be mere children, though they were of great age. Jaya and Vijaya, the gate keepers of the Vaikuntha interrupted Kumaras at the gate, thinking them to be children. They also told the Kumaras that Sri Vishnu was resting and that they could not see him then. The enraged Kumaras replied to Jaya and Vijaya that Vishnu is available for his devotees any time, and cursed both the keepers Jaya and Vijaya, that they would have to give up their divinity, be born on Earth, and live like normal human beings. Vishnu appeared before them and gatekeepers requested Vishnu to lift the curse of the Kumaras. Vishnu says that curse of the Kumaras cannot be reverted. Instead, he gives Jaya and Vijaya two options. The first option is to take seven births on Earth as a devotee of Vishnu, while the second is to take three births as his enemy. After serving either of these sentences, they can re-attain their stature at Vaikuntha and be with him permanently. Jaya and Vijaya could not bear the thought of staying away from Vishnu for seven lives. As a result, they choose to be born three times on Earth even though it would have to be as enemies of Vishnu. In the first life they were born as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Vishnu takes the *avatar* of Varaha to kill Hiranyaksha, and the *Narasimha* avatar to kill Hiranyakasipu. In the second life, they were born as *Ravana* and *Kumbhakarna*, being defeated by Rama avatar as depicted in the great Hindu epic *Ramayana* during the Tretayuga. Finally, in their third life, they were born as Sishupala and *Dantavakra* during the time of *Krishna* also part of the great *Mahabharata* epic which took place during the *Dwaparayuga*.

Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha were born to Diti (daughter of Daksha Prajapathi) and Sage Kashyapa. It is said that *asuras* were born to them as a result of their union at the time of sunset, which was said to be an inauspicious time for such a deed. After his brother's death at the hands of the Varaha avatar of Vishnu, Hiranyaksha's brother Hiranyakashipu, started to abhor Lord Vishnu. To which end he decided to attempt to kill Vishnu by gaining mystical powers, which he believed *Brahma*, the chief among the *devas* would award him if he underwent many years of great austerity and penance just as *Brahma* has awarded to *Rakshasas* (e.g. such as *Vibhishana*.) This initially seemed to work as planned with *Brahma* becoming pleased by Hiranyakashipu's austerities. *Brahma* thus appeared before Hiranyakashipu and offered him a boon of his choice. Upon Hiranyakashipu's asking for immortality, however, *Brahma* refused. Hiranyakashipu then requested the following:

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O my lord, O best of the givers of benediction, grant me that I not die within any residence or outside any residence, during the daytime or at night, nor on the ground or in the sky. Grant me that my death not be brought by any being other than those created by you, nor by any weapon, nor by any human being or animal. Grant me that I not meet death from any entity, living or nonliving. Grant me, further, that I not be killed by any demigod or demon or by any great snake from the lower planets. Since no one can kill you in the battlefield, you have no competitor. Therefore, grant me the benediction that I too may have no rival. Give me sole lordship over all the living entities and presiding deities, and give me all the glories obtained by that position. Furthermore, give me all the mystic powers attained by long austerities and the practice of yoga, for these cannot be lost at any time.

It is this aspect of the boon that Gurdial Singh has recapitulated in the opening section of the novel. In the opening section, as elsewhere, too, Gurdial Singh has used the story of Hiranyakashipu as a framing device. This mode of a 'framing device' helps him invest his narrative with multiple possibilities, while allowing him to scrupulously stay away from becoming a controlling, intrusive presence within the narrative. Gurdial Singh never becomes a narrator/commentator in his fiction; as he scrupulously allows his dramatic narration to speak for itself, a quality that sets him apart from his other contemporaries, even predecessors.

## **2012 Assembly Elections in Punjab: Ascendance of a State Level Party**

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The 2012 Assembly Elections in Punjab received attention for being the first elections in post-1966 reorganised Punjab to witness return to power of an incumbent party regime. The elections also saw the emergence of a new set of political leadership, most notably the rise of Sukhbir Badal, the SAD President who led the campaign and crafted the Akali victory. The rise and fall of Manpreet Badal, the founder President of Punjab Peoples Party in the role of the 'challenger' was another notable feature. The social and spatial patterns of electoral outcome, as revealed in the CSDS post-poll survey data, showed that the consistent efforts of the Akali Dal to broaden its support base while retaining its core social constituency in order to shed/lessen its dependency over the BJP has started bearing fruits. The Congress suffered an unexpected defeat primarily due to its leadership failure.

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### **Rise of State Level Parties**

The newly acquired significance of states as the platforms where electoral politics unfold in varying forms in recent India can be attributed to the fact that political articulation and mobilization of the people for electoral purposes increasingly swerve around identities formed or invented along ethno-regional lines. As the ethnic categories are mostly confined to a particular region or regions of a state, so any form of mobilisation or assertion in the shape of collective claims making takes place invariably at regional level, giving primacy to 'region' over the 'nation.'<sup>1</sup> The political parties strive first to gain and consolidate a 'core constituency' in the form of the support of a single numerically and economically significant caste/ community or alternatively a cluster of castes/communities at state/regional level before they go to broaden their support base. Apart from the politicised/ particised social cleavages, the fragmented nature of party system in the 'post-Congress polity'<sup>2</sup> also encourages parties of different hues to adopt such a strategy in search of an assured electoral dividend under the single plurality electoral system.

The above explains as to why the state level parties catering 'openly' to their core social constituency, have scored over the national parties especially in the assembly as well as local elections as 'primordial interests and ties-usually expressed in caste or communal terms' over the years have become 'powerful determinants of political activity at the state level' (Wood 1984, p. 3). Polity-wide parties like the Congress (and now BJP also) have to play 'a coded ethnic card, invoking ethnic identities quietly in its selection of candidates but not openly in its identification of issues' seeking the support of

ascriptive categories through the 'distribution of patronage but never through the rhetoric of identity' (Chandra 2004, p. 26).

As the 'local' acquires much more significance than the 'national', the coalition-maker national parties are left with no choice but to depend over the state level parties in forming as well as running the government smoothly even at the federal level, more so at the state level. This emergent process of 'federalisation of party system' has been most visible in the states like Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu (Haryana and Orissa not long ago), where a state level party is the dominant partner in a bipolar coalitional arrangement with national parties remaining junior partners. In fact, this has been the 'route', BJP adopted to register its 'presence' with fair success in the states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa where it had to start from a scratch.<sup>3</sup>

Along with the ascendance of the state level parties, what also adds to the newly exalted position of the regional states in Indian federal polity is the considerable power and influence wielded by the state level political leadership.<sup>4</sup> Like in the case of the state level parties, what adds to the clout of the state 'leader' is having a steady support base among the numerically and economically powerful community or cluster of communities within a state/region with whom he/she is identified with.<sup>5</sup> With mode of democracy turning more and more 'patrimonial' in nature, politics of 'patronage' and 'clientalism' reigns supreme even after election times are over. It explains as to why castes/communities imagining themselves more as 'political' than 'social' categories more often than not cling to their 'own' leader as well as the party he/she belongs to in the 'realistic' hope of being the beneficiary of the direct and indirect transfer of public resources.<sup>6</sup>

As of now, it is the state level leadership, irrespective of being affiliated to a national or a state party, that has been mainly instrumental in shaping the form and content of the party agenda/manifesto, distribution of party tickets, tenor of election campaigns and also deciding about important matter of alliance-building and modes of distribution of direct patronage and protection along the community lines. Personalising and centralising mode of functioning of state units of national parties explains the emergence of several powerful state leaders on the political horizon, who exercises considerable autonomy in relation to their respective parties. The trend is, of course, much more visible in the case of the state level parties including the much older, cadre-based and ideologically rooted state parties like Akali Dal, DMK and National Conference. State party leaders like Lalu Yadav, Sharad Pawar, Nitish Kumar, Karunanidhi, Ramvilas Paswan, Ajit Singh or Mayawati have cultivated their personal social support base veering around their communities and loyalists and as such they seem far more secured in terms of their political survival than the national leaders.

### **2012 Elections**

Looking back in a comparative mode at the 2012 Punjab Assembly elections in all its details shows that the state is not much of an exception. Not only had the

elections seen the consolidation of a state-level party, but also the emergence of a 'new' crop of leaders within the party like Bikram Singh Majithia led by the 'new leader' Sukhbir Singh Badal. The elections also further underlined the increasing dominance of a state party in a long-standing coalition with a polity-wide party.<sup>7</sup> The elections also witnessed a most virulent form of competitive populism as the two contending 'relevant'/'effective' parties, both lacking in terms of ideological content and organisational presence, indulged in patronage, clientalism and hollow promises mainly targeting their core social constituencies without any programmatic efforts to back them for electoral gains.

As a significant exception to the emergent trend in electoral politics across most of the states witness to 'assertion from below',<sup>8</sup> the social basis of power in Punjab has, however, remained unchallenged despite one third of the state population belonging to the scheduled castes (Judge 2012, page 18).<sup>9</sup> Punjab is yet to experience what has been hailed as the 'silent revolution' sweeping across the Indian states through electoral route as lower caste based state parties thrive on the plank of 'social justice'.<sup>10</sup>

The 2012 Assembly elections received wide attention as it bucked the hitherto well established tradition of voting out the incumbent party in power - see Table 1 below for the election results.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1: Elections Results, 2012 Assembly Election**

Name of Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Change from 2007	Vote (%)	% Change since 2007
INC	117	46	+2	40.09	-0.81
SAD (Badal)	97	56	+7	34.73	-2.36
BJP	23	12	-7	7.18	-1.10
BSP	117	0	0	4.29	+0.06
CPI	14	0	0	0.82	+0.06
CPM	9	0	0	0.16	-0.12
SAD (Mann)	57	0	0	0.28	-0.24
PPP	92	0	0	5.16	+5.16

Source: CSDS Data Unit

Besides banking on the electoral history of the state since its formation in 1966, the expectation of a victory for the Congress was also based on the 2009 elections results (see Table 2 below). Congress had taken a lead in as many as 65 Assembly constituency segments of the Lok Sabha constituencies, which were then being represented by the party legislators. The SAD on the other



hand had taken a lead in 50 constituencies segments. The BJP could take lead in only two constituencies.

**Table 2: Elections Results, 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha Elections**

	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Change from 2004	Vote (Per Cent)	Change since 2004 (Per Cent)
Congress Party	13	8	+6	45.23	+11.06
SAD (Badal)	10	4	-4	33.85	-0.43
BJP	3	1	-2	10.06	-0.42
BSP	13	0	0	5.75	-1.92
CPI	2	0	0	.33	-2.22
CPM	1	0	0	.14	-1.67
SAD (Mann)	3	0	0	.36	-3.43

Source: CSDS Data Unit

While discerning the long trends as reflected in the elections, inherent in the ensuing discussion would be an analysis of the factors that mattered in a remarkable election registering largely unexpected results<sup>12</sup> in favour of the SAD-BJP combine across the three regions<sup>13</sup> - see Table 3 below on performance of the two main parties. Even after the lapse of nearly one year, state level party leadership has been facing an avalanche of dissident voices.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 3: Region wise Analysis of performance of the two main parties in the 2012 Assembly Election**

	Total	Turnout	Congress		BJP+SAD	
Regions	Seats		Won	Votes (%)	Won	Votes (%)
MAJHA	25	75.0	9	41.2	16	47.2
DOABA	23	76.4	6	37.1	16	41.3
MALWA	69	80.6	31	40.6	36	40.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>41.9</b>

Source: CSDS Data Unit

For pursuing the above research agenda, present paper makes an attempt to analyse the 2012 elections in terms of nature of electoral participation, party manifestos, leadership style, and electoral campaigns.

### Electoral Participation, Campaign and the Issues

Punjab witnessed an unprecedented electoral participation at 78.6 percent of registered in these 'normal' elections, devoid of any 'wave'.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the female turnout at 79.1 percent was higher than male turnout at 78.1 percent.

What led to such a record turnout was the long-drawn intense campaigning by the parties. The elections also saw an all-time high number of contestants at 1,078 (418 independents). While the Punjab Peoples Party (PPP) led the *Sanjha Morcha* comprising of Communist Party of India (CPI), CPI (Marxist)<sup>16</sup> and Akali Dal (Barnala) launched the *Jago Punjab Yatra*, the Congress embarked on *Punjab Bachao Yatra* and the ruling Akali Dal undertook *Punjab Vikas Yatra*.

Extra efforts put in the campaigning by the two contending parties (especially the SAD) were primarily due to the emergence of PPP as the 'third alternative'. Given the close nature of verdicts in the state in terms of voting percentages in the past elections, Congress and SAD leadership went all out with the intent to capture not only the 'floating voters' but also to hold their ground against possible encroachment in their 'vote bank' by the PPP led *Sanjha Morcha*. The media hype created at the state level and massive crowds mainly comprising of the state youth in the election rallies of PPP President Manpreet Singh Badal, a renegade Akali, prompted the Akali leadership to hit the road almost a year and half before the elections were due to take place.

Notwithstanding the intensity and the high stakes involved, the campaign stood out as one of the cleanest in recent times in terms of the positive note of the language used by the political class across the board. Symptomatic of being a 'normal' election, the SAD as well as the Congress not only devoted their manifestos to the issues of development and governance (besides, of course, promising freebies as usual) but more significantly, even during the campaigns, refrained *completely* from raising emotive issues bordering on ethnicity or indulging in ugly mudslinging at personal level. Campaign cutting across the party lines concentrated broadly over the performance (or lack of it) of the ruling Akali Dal-BJP combine at the state level and Congress led UPA at the centre. As a result, the substantive issues related to the ordinary masses which earlier found space in the manifestos but were hardly heard during the campaigns, like the issues of unemployment, corruption, farmer's suicides, school education, cancer deaths in the cotton belt, massive indebtedness besides the omnipresent issue of *Bijli, Sadak and Pani*, this time very much dominated the proceedings. In the Akali Dal Manifesto, the panthic/emotive issues like justice for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, protecting the river waters, inclusion of Chandigarh and Punjabi speaking areas, legal reviews of cases filed during the days of militancy figured only in half a page. The same page contained also the resolve of the party to preserve peace and communal

harmony in a 'futuristic Punjab' ('Development for All', SAD Election Manifesto 2012, p. 15).

### **Delimitation of Constituencies**

The intensity of the campaign and major electoral upsets<sup>17</sup> that marked the 2012 Assembly elections as well as the preceding 2009 Lok Sabha elections can be attributed to the fact that Punjab, like the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, has witnessed major territorial changes in the constituencies' profiles due to the fourth delimitation exercise undertaken in 2008 by the Delimitation Commission, headed by Justice Kuldeep Singh. The changed electoral map in the state saw the number of reserved constituencies of Lok Sabha (for Scheduled Castes) going up from three to four in the 2009 elections. The number of Assembly constituencies reserved for the Scheduled Castes has increased from 29 to 34. An increase in the number of reserved constituencies and shifting of 4 assembly constituencies i.e. 2 each from Majha and Doaba to Malwa has in a significant way altered the power equilibrium in a state where the leaders across the parties are closely identified with the region they come from. Adding to the electoral volatility was the fact that quite a few sitting legislators who were 'victims' of the delimitation exercise, had to be adjusted in the neighbouring constituencies as 'parachuted' candidates much to the chagrin of the local party aspirants, some of whom went on to stand as independent candidate. An increase in the number of rebel candidates added further to the fiercely close nature of the electoral battles.<sup>18</sup>

### **Political Leadership**

The two youthful 'post-Bluestar' generation leaders who were put to 'litmus test' in these elections were Sukhbir Singh Badal and Manpreet Singh Badal, the estranged cousins.<sup>19</sup> They both led the campaigns of the SAD-BJP and PPP led Sanjha Morcha respectively. Typical of Punjab politics where along with caste, language and religion, kinship also remain a major determinant factor in electoral terms, it often looked like fratricidal war.

Arguably, the elections saw the emergence of Sukhbir Badal,<sup>20</sup> the Deputy Chief Minister, from the colossal shadow of his father and the five times Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal. In his capacity as the Party President, Badal junior played a decisive role for the second time in tickets distribution and also worked out the electoral strategy and led the campaign. Living up to his image of being an astute strategist, decisive and entrepreneurial politician, he chalked out constituency specific campaigns and candidates' selection. Following the SAD manifesto, media campaign (control over cable industry meant perennial 'Badal Darshan') as well as campaign speeches indicated the continued effort of the 'new leader/heir apparent' to broaden the party's social support base among the urban mostly Hindu voters while retaining its core support base of rural Sikhs.<sup>21</sup> Listing 'achievements' like building or planning to build expressways, metros, over-bridges, international airports, solid waste

management and drinking water projects in the cities of Punjab during the campaign underlined the electoral strategy of the SAD leadership to attract the support of the burgeoning urban voters. The strategy seemed to shed the dependence of the party over its long-standing ally i.e. BJP, a party with a traditional urban, upper-caste Hindu support base.<sup>22</sup> Conscious efforts to change the electorates' popular perception of the image of SAD from being a 'panthic' party of Jat-Sikhs to a party for '*Punjab, Punjabis and Punjabi*', as per the 1995 Moga declaration, was strengthened by the party's well publicised move to give tickets to as many as 11 Hindu candidates out of which 10 actually went on to win their seats.<sup>23</sup> The electoral outcome showed that the SAD succeeded in reaping the electoral dividend due to its 'social engineering'.<sup>24</sup> The SAD-BJP combine not only won 36 out of 62 Sikh majority constituencies as compared to 26 seats won by the Congress but also managed to win in 13 out of 19 Hindu majority constituencies as compared to only 4 seats won by the Congress.<sup>25</sup> In terms of locality specific outcomes, again the SAD-BJP combine had a head start over the Congress even in the urban constituencies winning 9 out of 17 urban constituencies as compared to Congress winning only in 6 constituencies. Again the SAD, considered a party of farmers, retained its traditional support base in rural Punjab by winning 42 out of 66 constituencies as compared to the Congress which could only win 23 seats (*EPW*, 2012, p. 72).

The elections also saw the arrival of another youthful leader in the form of Manpreet Badal, four times MLA from Gidderbaha and former finance minister of Punjab who was expelled by Akal Dal in October 2010 due to his differences with Sukhbir Badal, ostensibly over economic policy matters though the 'inheritance issue' was also there. Enjoying a clean image as a politician, a rarity in Punjab, Manpreet Badal drew attention of the youth as well as urban middle classes with his leadership style that drew heavily from symbolism and the 'saintly idioms'.<sup>26</sup> Presenting himself as a 'game changer' and invoking the 'Punjabi pride' to return to its lost glory, Manpreet Badal promised the electorate a reformist agenda, a promise that lacked credibility given the lack of organisational base of his party (Kumar, 2010). He failed to retain his key supporters. Sitting rebel Akali MLAs Kushaldeep Singh Dhillon and Jagbeer Singh Brar walked away from him to join the Congress on the eve of elections, raising a question mark about his ability to be a team-leader and an organization man unlike his cousin who has excelled as a 'machine man' despite his 'rough and ready' brand of real politics.<sup>27</sup> Lack of funds<sup>28</sup> along with lack of winnability factor also went against the PPP in a state that has had a stable bipolar party system for long. For a nascent party, however, receiving more than 5 per cent vote share in a state where all the parties except Congress, BJP and SAD have suffered over the period from a steady decline in terms of vote share does hold some promise for Manpreet Badal leadership provided he builds his party base. At the same time, his getting defeated badly even in the constituency (Gidderbaha) that he had represented since 1985 without a break, does raise a question mark.

As for the two ageing chief ministerial candidates for their respective parties in the fray, they both have been proven mass leaders with a state-wide support base. This is remarkable as in Punjab most of the leaders' power and influence hardly extend even to the region they belong to, and that too not for long.

Badal senior, long serving Chief Minister of the state,<sup>29</sup> and among the senior-most active politician of stature in the country, has been credited with bringing peace and stability in post-militancy Punjab by emphasising Hindu-Sikh unity.<sup>30</sup> As a 'reconciler' in 'Vajpayee mould' and as someone who has been a survivor in the volatile politics of the state, Badal senior has also been credited with pulling BJP along in a long-term alliance despite the ideological differences and different social support base. In the 1997 elections when despite having a majority of its own, Badal led Akali Dal had formed a coalition government with the BJP.

To his discredit, however, Badal senior may be held responsible for prioritising the party's electoral survival when contemplating policy options, even at the cost of the perceived long-term gains for the state that has been experiencing deceleration of growth for more than a decade now. There has been an unprecedented rise in '*Kunbaparasti*' in terms of ticket distribution in recent elections as well as in the composition of council of ministers, unusual for a cadre based ideologically rooted Akali Dal. To what extent Badal senior, given his 'control' over the official Akali Dal and also unmistakable 'influence' over the SGPC and the Akal Takht since the demise of Gurchanan Singh Tohra, can be held responsible for the degeneration of Akali Dal into a 'family party' is a moot question (Kumar, 2012).

As for the Congress whether in Punjab or elsewhere, it has now been more a trend than an aberration to promote 'family politics'.<sup>31</sup> Even by their own standards, however, state level Congress leaders overdid it this time.<sup>32</sup> They cornered tickets for their kinsmen and cronies. This resulted into the 'rebel factor', a huge factor in causing the party's defeat. Amrinder Singh, like other top leaders of the party such as Rajinder Kaur Bhattal and Jagmeet Brar to name a few, could not absolve himself from the responsibility as his son got the ticket.<sup>33</sup> As the anointed chief strategist and tallest leader of the party in the state for more than a decade, the Captain, a former Patiala royal, has often been accused, even by his own party men, for being 'inaccessible' and 'laidback' and also unable to rise over and above factional politics, a fact that showed in his inability in tackling the rebel factor which cost the party dearly in as many as 14 constituencies where the margin between victory and defeat was very narrow.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the perception that as a Chief Minister during 2002-2007, Captain had failed to provide an effective and clean government also blunted the charge against the SAD-BJP government non-performance.<sup>35</sup> The party apparently paid for the complacency shown during the campaign, having too much faith in the electoral tradition of the state. Congress was the last in announcing the names of party candidates, that too in instalments, and it also delayed releasing the party manifesto well after the dates of the elections

were announced thus giving a head start to the SAD-BJP combine in the run-up to elections.

### **Role of Deras**

The lopsided nature of the state polity was well illustrated in the way *Dera* episode was played out during the campaign with much fanfare by the political class cutting across the party lines. After *Dera Sacha Sauda*, with its open support for Congress reportedly playing an important role in the party winning as many as 37 seats in the Malwa region in the 2007 elections, *Deras* are now acknowledged as playing an important role in determining the electoral choices of their followers. Most of these belong to the socially and economically marginal groups, including the large chunk of migrant farm/industrial labourers from poorer states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Chhattisgarh.

In Punjab, the participation of the lower castes has remained confined to mere 'presence' in the party forums or in the state legislature and the actual political power, irrespective of the party in power, has remained firmly with the numerically strong land-owning Jat Sikh community.<sup>36</sup> Thus, unwilling to share power, leadership of the main parties has taken recourse to the 'softer' option of cultivating the *Deras* to 'deliver' *en bloc* the subaltern votes without the need to undertake any substantive efforts to democratise the social base of the power structure.<sup>37</sup> Top party leaders like Amrinder Singh, Rajinder Kaur Bhattal and Manpreet Badal, followed by hundreds of candidates in the fray, made their rounds of the influential *Deras*. Even some Akali candidates, in defiance of the SGPC directive, sought the blessings of the *Deras*.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, the SAD failed to issue a clear-cut directive in this regard.

Over the longer term, with religion finally beginning to recede into the background as an electoral factor, the sizable presence of dalits and other backward communities in the state is going to be a crucial determining factor in state electoral politics, with the caste factor likely to take over. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) top leadership based in Uttar Pradesh has not shown much inclination to consolidate what could have been its 'natural' support base in the state, as was apparent in the party gaining a 12 per cent vote share in the 1997 elections.<sup>39</sup> Caste-based regional/state level parties like the Begampura Party representing Ravidasias in the Doaba region, are likely to mark their presence in the coming years. Increasing entrenchment of political power in the hands of the wealthy and influential Jat Sikh political families, more often than not interrelated in prudent marriage alliances, explains why the Congress and the Akali Dal leadership has not shown any inclination to remove the 'representational blockage'.

### **Politics of Populism**

How then did the SAD manage to make a dent in the traditional support base of the Congress especially that of the rural poor with most of them of low-

caste origin? Arguably, it had much to do with the massive direct transfer of public resources to the rural poor in the form of *Atta-Dal*, *Shagun* (monetary help for girls' marriage), and *Mai-Bhago Vidya* (bicycles for girl students)<sup>40</sup> schemes alongside sops for the rich farmers like free power to tube wells. The schemes were operational on the ground despite the economic difficulties and helped the Akali cause. This was revealed clearly in the CSDS post-poll 2012 survey findings. Remarkably, 80 percent of the poor respondents interviewed had heard about the Atta-Dal scheme and 70 percent admitted to be beneficiaries. Likewise 85 percent of the farmers had heard about free power to tube wells (in existence since 1997) and 68 percent accepted to have benefited from the scheme. Further, 55 percent of the dalit families interviewed during the survey reported having benefited from free power whereas 78 percent of the respondents had heard about it (*EPW*, 2012, page 75). Success of populist schemes especially those targeted towards women bore fruit as the SAD-BJP recorded a significant lead of 5 percentage points over the Congress among the women voters as per the CSDS survey. 44 per cent of women respondents interviewed voted for SAD whereas only 39 per cent supported the Congress.<sup>41</sup>

The SAD, this time held out some really incredible promises like grant of free five Marla plots for all the landless poor in the state, free gas connections for all BPL families, generation of one million jobs in next five years out of which 200,000 jobs to be in the government sector, free laptops to all the higher secondary government schools (SAD Manifesto 2012, pages 20 and 29). The Congress, on the rebound, also indulged in some ludicrous promises like creating 10 lakh jobs, making a mockery of the sanctity of manifesto politics ('*Navi Soch Nava Punjab*', Congress Manifesto 2012-2017, p. 23). The problem with the Congress was that the electorate showed more belief in the Akali Dal indulgence in fiscal profligacy. The Congress was in any case highlighting the precarious health of the state's economy and underlining the need to introduce urgent reformist measures. As also happened in the case of Uttar Pradesh, the Congress's belated attempt to remind the rural/urban poor of schemes such as NREGA, JNURM, Pradhanmantri Sadak Yojana, Indira Gandhi old age pension schemes, Sarv Sikhsha Abhiyan and also importantly that most of the welfarist and developmental schemes were being funded by the centre and not by the 'bankrupt' government, did not cut much ice with the electorate as delivery was undertaken by state functionaries.

### **Shift in Electoral Agenda?**

What about much celebrated shift in the electoral agenda, supposedly going on in the state since the 1997 elections. Over the years the panthic agenda has given away to the peace and developmental agenda by the mainstream parties as well as the electorates.<sup>42</sup> This shift has not been as straightforward or smooth and can't be merely be put down to the fact that identity issues were not raked up during the campaign, as the campaign and the positioning of the contending parties left much to be desired if one actually looks back at what

happened during the run-up to elections. In a state with 'missing girl children' and which is facing an environmental disaster due to the reckless use of mechanised irrigation and fertilisers, neither the Congress nor the Akali Dal during their campaign focused primarily on the issue of female foeticide, continuing loss of green cover, unplanned urban growth by the land mafia or pollution of rivers and ground water. The Akali Dal, which had way back undertaken a long-term initiative called '*Nanhi Chhan*' (the little shade) to save the girl child from foeticide and also created awareness about the environment seemed to forget about it. The patriarchal character of political culture was also underlined by the insignificant presence of women as party candidates. Even over the drug menace that threatens to destroy an entire generation of Punjab youth, the parties failed to come out with a clear-cut roadmap to curb widely prevalent drug peddling. Organising sports events or building stadiums is certainly not going to be much helpful in keeping the drug mafia at bay, as the SAD seems to believe. And then, while the convergence of the electoral agenda towards 'developmentalism' was most welcome, even if at the rhetoric level, given the turbulent history of the borderland state, one still felt uneasiness about the 'personalised' mode of politics which encourages collusion between the state and political institutions for nefarious purposes ('vendetta') at the local level.<sup>43</sup> During the election campaigns when one heard ordinary people frequently complaining about '*dhakkashahi*' (intimidation or violence), it was not only the 2008 Panchayat elections that saw appropriation of panchayat bodies by the ruling party functionaries allegedly using the strong arms tactics. The people suffered from rampant corruption.<sup>44</sup> The Congress supporters complained of day to day harassment and also the denial of access to the distributional welfarist schemes.

### Looking Ahead

Did the 2012 elections mark a discernible shift in terms of the nature of state's electoral politics or was it just yet another 'normal' election in the sense that social basis of political power has remained intact or even getting reinforced in terms of its social basis? As is obvious from the above discussion, the polity remains lopsided. It is therefore imperative that the established parties' leadership in the state make conscious efforts to democratise/institutionalise their party organs to curb the emerging personalising and centralising mode of politics and broaden the democratic base of their respective parties. Heavy dependence on direct patronage and opportunistic 'social engineering' without much care for democratic ethos or public ethics also needs to be reviewed. The leadership across the party lines needs to further remember that the lopsidedness and degeneration of the polity is bound to reflect adversely in the domain of substantive public policies initiatives and success. As the CSDS survey showed, for the electorate, economic issues like price rises, unemployment, development of the state and corruption remain of paramount concern.<sup>45</sup> Being one of the three most indebted states in the country, along with West Bengal and Kerala, with debt amounting to 78 thousand crores and



increasing every fiscal year and also having registered only a 5.90 percent economic growth rate against the national rate of 8.2 per cent during 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan, are sufficient indicators of poor fiscal health of the state for quite some time. The question is how can the state's economy recover its fiscal health if the SAD-BJP regime continues to indulge in direct transfer of public resources to the powerful landed peasantry as well as the electorate living in penury in the name of 'development/ performance'? It is difficult, for instance, to make sense of the appointment of as many as 31 chief parliamentary secretaries in a state only having an 18-member cabinet given the huge administrative expenditure this incurs and also considering the fact that they keep complaining of lack of work.

There has been a critical need of long-term reforms in the key economic sectors. While there has been persistent talk of the 'second green revolution' and also of the need to bring in investment for much needed industrial development, to make the state surplus in terms of power, nothing much has been achieved on the ground so far. Central grants for development have been diverted in the past, and there is no guarantee that it won't happen again. The much publicised administrative reforms, including e-governance and the Right to Service Act have also not made much headway. Elections raised expectations of the gullible ordinary electorate looking for more state largesse. As of now most of the promises made in the SAD-BJP manifesto have remained largely on paper,<sup>46</sup> given the precarious state of economy and lack of political will to take tough measures. The continued non-performance may allow the Congress to reap the benefits in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections but whether it would bring a much awaited turnaround in the fate of the beleaguered state is a moot question.

[The paper refers to the findings of a post-poll survey conducted in Punjab by the CSDS, Delhi. A total of 3,250 respondents, selected randomly from the electoral roll, were interviewed face to face in randomly sampled 45 constituencies covering 4 polling stations from each constituency. The fieldwork was coordinated jointly by Ashutosh Kumar and Jagrup Singh Sekhon. The survey team comprising of Masters Degree students was affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. Some of the survey findings have been published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7 April, 2012, pp. 71-75]

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> While asked to prioritise their loyalty in the National Election Studies conducted by CSDS-Lokniti in 1996 and 1999, 53 and 51 per cent of the respondents respectively expressed their first loyalty to region they belonged to rather than to India whereas only 21 per cent in both post-poll surveys put their loyalty first to India.

<sup>2</sup> Yadav (1996, p. 95) has referred to the verdicts in the assembly elections held in sixteen states between 1993-95 as ushering in 'a new era in the country's politics' marking the 'reconfiguration of the party system' in the form of a 'competitive multi-party system which no longer be defined with reference to the Congress'. In the process Congress also learnt to 'transform itself from the dominant party in a dominant party system to a competitive party in a multi-party system' (Rudolph and Rudolph 2008, p. 36).

<sup>3</sup> On their part, the state level parties like the SAD got 'locked-in' to the BJP either due to 'mutual electoral interdependence' or to avoid 'splitting of the vote against their common rival, the Congress party'. 'Territorial compatibility' and not the 'ideological compatibility' has been the key to most of the long-term coalitional arrangements as in the case of Punjab (Sridharan 2012, p. 328).

<sup>4</sup> Leadership as a subject has remained inexplicably under-researched especially when it comes to the state level leadership. Price and Rudd (2010, p. XVI) have attributed it to three factors: first, focus on the national leaders who are 'seen to have shaped India's post-colonial future'; second, 'dominance of nationalist narrative...undervalues the importance of 'regional' (and by implication somehow less important) leaders; third, 'the strident assertion of identity politics in the electoral arena' encompasses 'any discussions of individual leaders as part of ...wider group phenomenon'.

<sup>5</sup> One can see Supriya Sule, single child of Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar, emerging as the 'natural inheritor' of her father's legacy bypassing Ajit Pawar, the nephew of Pawar senior. Pawar family in this sense is like Thakre and Badal families in Maharashtra and Punjab respectively where the 'leader' has preferred his child over the nephew.

<sup>6</sup> Along with the practice of direct patronage and protection based on ethno-regional loyalties, decline of organisational presence as well as ideology ('convergence' of electoral agenda) across the party lines has also brought to fore the criticality of local leadership factor in electoral battle.

<sup>7</sup> The pattern of party competition in the two neighbouring states i.e. Punjab and Haryana resemble each other in the sense that both states have a bipolar party system with the Congress party facing a state level party in alliance with a national party. However, in contrast to Punjab, the identity of the main anti-Congress party in Haryana has been changing i.e. Haryana Vikas Party was replaced by the Indian National Lok Dal in 2000. In another similarity, the BJP, a polity-wide party has played the role of a junior partner, as to SAD in Punjab, to a state party in Haryana over the years (refer BJP alliance with Haryana Vikas Party, followed by INLD to Haryana Janhit Congress at present) (Nikolenyi, 2010, p. 135).

<sup>8</sup> 'India's electoral system has in recent years become increasingly subaltern friendly' as it has 'given the members of subaltern groups a point of entry into ruling elite and a share of state resources', (Chandra, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> The Scheduled Castes constitute about 30 per cent of the state's population, highest in the country. However, the Scheduled Castes are divided not only along caste lines but also religious lines that result in 'an absence of any visible pattern in their voting behaviour' (Judge, 2012, p. 18).

<sup>10</sup> India is depicted as experimenting with 'a silent revolution' as political power is 'being transferred, on the whole peacefully, from the upper caste elites to various subaltern groups... The relative calm of the Indian experience is primarily due to the fact the whole process is incremental', (Jaffrelo, 2003, p. 494).

<sup>11</sup> In recent years the ruling parties in Gujarat, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh have managed to defy the anti-incumbency factor mainly due to the state level leadership factor.

<sup>12</sup> The SAD-BJP combine, with a lead of less than two percent in terms of vote share (it actually suffered from a negative vote swing) achieved a lead of 22 seats over Congress.

<sup>13</sup> In 25 constituencies of the Majha region, Congress polled 41.2 per cent of votes cast registering victories in 9 constituencies as compared to the SAD-BJP combine receiving 47.2 per cent of the vote and winning in 16 constituencies. In 23 constituencies of Doaba region, the Congress received 37.1 percent of votes polled winning in 6 seats as compared to SAD getting 41.6 percent of the vote share and winning in 16 seats. In the crucial Malwa region, the Congress received 40.6 per cent of votes polled and won in 31 seats as compared to SAD-BJP combine which secured victory in 30 constituencies though having less vote share at 40.3 per cent (*EPW*, 2012, p. 71).

<sup>14</sup> Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, the former Congress legislative party leader has been replaced by Sunil Jakhar.

<sup>15</sup> Voting percentage in the assembly elections in the post-1966 reorganized Punjab has been 71.18, 72.27, 68.63, 65.36, 64.33, 67.47, 23.82, 68.73, 62.14 and 75.36 respectively in 1967, 1969, 1972, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007. The 1992 elections saw exceptionally low participation due to boycott by the Akalis and also due to threats made by militants. In the 2012 elections, total number of eligible voters were 1,76,82,363 out of whom 1,38,92,749 actually voted.

<sup>16</sup> The CPI and the CPI (M) contested from 14 and 9 seats respectively. All the CPM candidates lost their deposits. Refer to (Singh, 2012, pp. 22-23) for an analysis of the decline of the Left parties who in the 1997 and 2002 elections had an electoral alliance with the Congress.

<sup>17</sup> As many as 7 cabinet ministers lost the elections, many of them victims of delimitation exercise as either they lost their constituencies forcing them to look for new constituencies or because their constituencies underwent major territorial/demographic changes.

<sup>18</sup> Congress suffered the most in the process as adjusting the sitting legislators in the neighbouring constituencies needed non-partisan deft handling, which was not possible in the faction ridden Congress where party bosses decided

among their favourites. By way of an estimate, due to the 'rebel factor' as many as 14 Congress candidates lost elections with less than a margin of 2000 votes including 4 with less than five hundred votes (Judge, 2012, p. 17). Akali leadership, with the exception of Bains brothers in the two Ludhiana constituencies, were able to win back the rebels within the party fold while 'encouraging' the Congress rebel candidates to remain in the fray.

<sup>19</sup> For comparison, one can refer to the politically powerful Thakre family in Maharashtra where Udhav Thakre, President of Shiv Sena, is pitted against his estranged cousin Raj Thakre, the latter forming his own party Maharashtra Navnirman Sena.

<sup>20</sup> Symbolic of changing times, in the election Manifesto released by SAD in 2012, Sukhbir Badal also figured along with his father, unlike the 2007 Manifesto.

<sup>21</sup> CSDS survey data reveals that in comparison to 2007, this time SAD-BJP lost 8 percent of the Jat Sikh vote. Even then 52 per cent of the Jat voters interviewed during the survey supported the SAD-BJP combine in comparison to only 31 per cent voting for the congress. As per the respective survey data the significant gain for the combine was in terms of the dalit vote as 33 per cent of the dalit respondents interviewed reported voting for the SAD-BSP in the 2012 survey contrast to only 14 per cent in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections.

<sup>22</sup> Among the urban voters, especially the upper caste Hindus, considered the traditional voters of BJP, the SAD-BJP lost up to 10 and 9 percent of votes respectively, as compared to the 2007 CSDS-NES figures.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Sukhbir Singh Badal, (*Frontline*, April 6, 2012, p. 19). Significantly, the Congress fielded 41 Jat Sikhs candidates, which was higher than the SAD, traditionally known as Jat Sikh party. Notably in most seats that saw a Jat Sikh versus Hindu candidate fight, the latter won (*Indian Express*, May 13, 2012, p. 4).

<sup>24</sup> Despite having ideological differences SAD-BJP alliance has remained intact because of the following factors: the two parties have complementary social support base, the pattern of sharing of power between the self-anointed representatives of the two communities in the state does help in striking a much valued social balance given the troubled past. However, most important factor has been the realization by the Akali leadership that based on its past electoral performance; the party cannot win power on its own given the fact that Congress has always enjoyed a decent support base among the Sikh community (Kumar, 2004, p. 1516).

<sup>25</sup> Social engineering' apparently took 'defection route' as the SAD leadership gave party ticket to Joginder Pal Jain to fight the assembly by-election from Moga constituency after he resigned from the Congress and the assembly seat in January 2013.

<sup>26</sup> The challenge put up by his estranged cousin galvanized Sukhbir Badal and led the SAD-BJP government to go for corrective measures like e-governance

and more importantly to ensure that the populist pro-poor schemes became operational.

<sup>27</sup> In the 2009 CSDS-NES survey data relating to the question regarding the respondents' choice about Chief Minister for Punjab; merely 2 per cent had preferred Badal junior, the heir apparent in waiting, over his father who was preferred by 27 per cent. In the CSDS-NES Exit Poll, 2007 the trends were similar as 39 per cent of the respondents had then preferred Badal senior over his son who could get the approval of only 1.8 per cent respondents. The fact that over the years the situation has remained unchanged was also evident in the 2012 survey as only 5 per cent of voters preferred Sukhbir Badal as Chief Minister whereas Badal senior, now five times Chief Minister of Punjab received 38 per cent approval.

<sup>28</sup> Sukhbir Badal, allegedly not only 'bankrolled party nominees but also generously backed Bahujan Samaj Party candidates and Congress rebels to cut into Congress vote.' See 'The MBA Programme for Electoral History', *India Today*, April 9, 2012, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> Punjab's previous Chief Ministers have been Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir (1966), Justice Gurnam Singh (1967), Lachhman Singh Gill (1967), Giani Jail Singh (1972), Darbara Singh (1980), Surjit Singh Barnala (1985), Beant Singh (1992), Harcharan Singh Brar (1995), Rajinder Kaur Bhattal (1996), Amrinder Singh (2002), Prakash Singh Badal (1970, 1977, 1997, 2007, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Hardliners represented by the Akali Dal (Amritsar) led by Simaranjit Singh Mann and Dal Khalsa have been on the margin of Punjab politics. After the debacle in 2002 and 2007 elections, this time there was no effort to form a Panthic Morcha by the hardliners.

<sup>31</sup> During the survey it was observed that virtually every Punjab village has been witness to politics being defined in terms of '*Gharebandi*' as family based loyalties get prioritized over any other consideration in determining the electoral choices.

<sup>32</sup> The Congress had appointed Gulchain Singh Charak, a Jammu based Congress leader, as the Congress observer for Punjab but the important issues like ticket distribution were mostly decided by the leaders belonging to the state.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, Amrinder Singh's own brother Malwinder Singh rebelled and joined the Akali Dal. However, in January, 2013 he returned to the Congress.

<sup>34</sup> There were in total eight constituencies where the candidates getting the second largest number of votes polled were Congress rebels turned independents. The SAD-BJP combine won from as many as seven constituencies leaving one for the Congress (Judge 2012, page 17). One can infer clearly that Congress was done in by internal dissension that was mainly due to the denial of tickets to the deserving candidates either due to the patronage based factional politics within party as well as *Kunbaparasti*.

<sup>35</sup> In terms of the electorate's choice as Chief Minister in the CSDS-NES post-poll survey, Amrinder Singh received approval of 33 per cent of the

respondents whereas Prakash Singh Badal was the most preferred choice for Chief Minister for 38 per cent of the respondents interviewed (EPW, 2012, p. 74).

<sup>36</sup> That the social basis of political power in the state remained unchallenged received empirical evidence in the social profile of the winning candidates. As per an estimate, as many as 50 legislators in the newly constituted Assembly belong to the dominant Jat Sikh community and among other winning candidates were eight upper caste Khatri/Arora, six Banias and five Brahmins whereas only seven backward castes candidates have emerged victorious (Judge, 2012, p. 19).

<sup>37</sup> Deras this time reportedly supported individual candidates rather than the parties. The significance accorded to the Dera factor may appear to be overplayed as Harminder Jassi, sitting legislator from Bhatinda whose daughter is married to the *Dera Sacha Sauda* chief, lost this time.

<sup>38</sup> Besides Dera Sacha Sauda, other influential Deras much in demand among the politicians are *Dera Sachkhand Ballan*, *Piar Singh Bhanjarawala Dera* and *Divya Jyoti Jagriti Sansthan*.

<sup>39</sup> The BSP's vote share in 34 reserved (SC) constituencies in the 2012 elections was merely 6.1 percent. Unlike the past elections, Congress could not make much gain from BSP failure and could win only in 10 constituencies polling 40.1 percent of votes polled. Riding on the politics of populism, SAD-BJP combine managed to win an impressive 24 seats with 42.3 percent of the votes polled in these constituencies (EPW, 2012, page 72). Apparently the BSP fighting on all 117 seats managed to wean away the crucial dalit vote which would have otherwise gone to the Congress, giving rise to insinuation of 'a deal' between the SAD and BSP.

<sup>40</sup> Women voters showed distinct preference for the SAD-BJP combine as revealed in the CSDS survey. Arguably more in the case of the poor among women voters as they might have been more concerned about the continuation of the populist schemes that helped their family members, as one young woman voter put it during the interview. As per the survey findings, however, electorates belonging to the lower and very poor classes preferred Congress over the SAD-BJP.

<sup>41</sup> Badal senior's popularity among the women voters was an added factor. Significantly, in the past CSDS surveys, Congress had the lead.

<sup>42</sup> Panthic issues were recognised as being the most important election issue by merely 2 percent of the respondents in the 2012 CSDS survey.

<sup>43</sup> The local police officers are directed to report to the local ruling party legislators/ministers thereby undermining the professionalism of the police force. There have been allegations against police of registering false cases against the Congress supporters.

<sup>44</sup> The Agriculture Minister Tota Singh was indicted and sentenced for misuse of official vehicles during his earlier tenure as Minister during 1997-2002.

<sup>45</sup> During the survey, the most important election issues identified by the respondents were price rise (41 percent), unemployment (22 percent), development of state (12 percent) and corruption (9 percent). Apparently, on the issue of price rise and corruption, the UPA government's non-performance cost Congress in the state.

<sup>46</sup> Nearly 16 lakh families which were provided blue cards by the SAD-BJP government, entitling them to Atta- Dal scheme, had not received subsidized Atta and Dal since the elections (*Indian Express*, May 18, 2012).

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## Book Reviews

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Gurinder Singh Mann, *Sikhism*; Doris K. Jakobsh, *Sikhism*; Nikki Guninder-Kaur Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction* by **Jim Lochtefeld**



Nikky Guninder-Kaur Singh, *Of Sacred and Secular Desire: An Anthology of Lyrical Writings from the Punjab*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012) xix + 252 pp. ISBN 978 1 84885 884 8 (pb), £17.99.

Within the world of Sikh Studies which is still so heavily dominated by men, Nikky Singh is particularly known for her pioneering articulation of the female voice. But besides her feminist studies of topics in Sikhism, she has over the years also demonstrated her keen aesthetic sensibilities in a number of publications which have significantly added to the rather under-represented field of Punjabi literary studies. In this regard, mention may particularly be made of *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus* (1995), her deservedly well-received volume of translations from Sikh sacred literature, which are distinguished both by their freshness and by their then new alertness to issues of gender sensitivity. More recently, she has also published *Cosmic Symphony: The Early and Later Poems of Bhai Vir Singh* (2008), whose translations admirably capture the distinctive tone of the short Punjabi lyrics composed by the greatest Sikh literary artist of the early twentieth century from the fresh beginnings of his long creative career to the more discursive manner of his later years.

As its subtitle indicates, this new anthology is broader in scope, drawing from writers outside the Sikh tradition with the aim of giving English-speaking readers representative samples of different parts of the rich Punjabi lyrical tradition. Rather remarkably, perhaps, there is no comparable anthology of translations in existence, so the book is to be welcomed for its pioneering character as well as for the attractive and vivid style in which the poems have been rendered into English. The book admirably passes the basic test of any anthology of poetry, which is that it should be enjoyable to pick up and flip through, with each return to its pages producing items to strike the imagination and to stay in the memory. Nikky Singh's well-honed skills as a translator are once again evident on every page, where the decision to print the typical half-verses of most highly rhymed lyrical Punjabi metres as separate lines of rhythmic but unrhymed English generally succeeds very well in conveying a genuine feel of the original.

The volume comprises four categories of poetry. The first is drawn from the Guru Granth Sahib, and so it naturally overlaps with *The Name of My Beloved*, indeed the translation here of the greatest and longest poem in the entire collection, Guru Nanak's *Japuji*, is largely identical with that in the earlier volume. Besides other poems of Guru Nanak there are also a few by Guru Arjan, and more by Sheikh Farid, who amply deserves his place as the first genuine Punjabi poet, and by Namdev and Ravidas, whose less plausible claims for inclusion in a collection of lyrical writings from the Punjab are justified by the keenly argued if debatable definition of the Guru Granth Sahib as 'the quintessential Punjabi text'.

In a narrower sense, it is the writings of Muslim poets which might be more plausibly argued to constitute the quintessence of pre-modern Punjabi literature, and the next chapter is headed 'Beloved Sufi Poets'. Besides necessarily very

abbreviated passages from Waris Shah's *Hir*, which perhaps had to be included to represent the iconic Punjabi classic, the chapter also includes a generous and beautifully translated selection of *kafis* by Bullhe Shah, the author of so many peerlessly memorable lyrics of divine love. It is particularly good to see these alongside the poetry from the Sikh scriptural tradition, and their typical themes – especially the romance of Hir and Ranjha which is so central to the 'matter of Punjab' on which so many Punjabi writers draw – help set the context for the third chapter which is devoted to three poets of the early twentieth century.

These inevitably include Bhai Vir Singh, and many of his most famous lyrics, like *Banafshe da Phull*, *Kutab di Lath*, or *Avantipur de Khande*, which have been endlessly anthologized in Punjabi, may now be properly appreciated in English here. In keeping with the Nikky Singh's often stated goal of representing the cross-communal cultural unity which she regards as the ideal betrayed by imperialist policies and the human failings of sad social realities, the great Sikh poet is here teamed with two other enthusiasts for the Punjabi cause, the Hindu poet Dhani Ram Chatrik and the Pakistan writer Firoz Din Sharaf. Their lyrics will be less familiar to many readers, so it is good to see them translated here, where one cannot fail to remark on the notable similarity of their themes with those of their Punjabi contemporaries who chose to write in Urdu or Hindi. Similar observations might be made about the final chapter, entitled 'Postmodern Female Poet', which is devoted to the leading Punjabi poet of the next generation, Amrita Pritam, whose work is again well presented in representative translations of high quality.

It should be apparent that this anthology, which comes with a full and helpful bibliography, is admirably ambitious in aim and scope. Some aspects of the book are open to criticism, ranging from minor features like the failure to provide textual references with page-numbers for readers wanting to check the translations against their originals, to the sometimes questionable sweeping definitions of Punjabi cultural identity. But this is a book whose fine translations should do much to bring Punjabi poetry to a wider audience. As such, it fills a real gap on the shelves and its appearance is to be warmly welcomed.

**Christopher Shackle**  
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Singh, Pashaura (ed.) *Sikhism in a Global Context*, (Delhi: OUP India, 2011), 304 pp. ISBN-10: 0198075545 (hardback), £30.00.

Sikh studies can count amongst its writers an increasing number of specialist researchers who use ethnographical approaches to understand the global diaspora. Their works reflect the expanding borders of the field by moving away from the regional, scriptural, linguistic and theological study of Sikhs. This corpus tackles the more "...contentious and contemporary issues of Sikh identity,

culture and social relations” (p.2). In bringing together writings on Sikhism’s historiography, on present-day Sikh practices and the future of Sikh identity this book is a good reflection of the depth in the field - in much the same way as Knut Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold’s *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

The selected essays also provide a rejoinder to the criticism that Sikh studies can sometimes be aloof from the ‘lived reality’ of the *panth* and *qaum*. However, there are some areas missing that might have further assisted the editor with his intention to reflect the “widening of the area of Sikh studies” (p.2). For instance research on the newer Sikh diaspora in Italy / Spain / Scandinavia or the refugee Sikhs from Afghanistan would have added context when evaluating Himadri Bannerjee’s essay on the older Sikh settlement in East India. Sikh youth and women, though so topical and so demographically influential, are also not specifically addressed. In addition to the bold ideas offered here already, these research areas could have supplied further support for the editor’s call for “...a need to look at Sikhism from a global perspective” (p.5).

In amongst the twelve works the accelerating journey of Sikh studies is epitomised by two in particular. First, Doris Jakobsh, using her thirty years’ experience of teaching Sikhism, concludes that it is timely to now consider the concept of “Sikhisms” (pp.62-84). Reflecting that in 1976 Juergensmeyer argued that the “...study of Sikhism was either completely ignored or misrepresented...” (p.1), then Jakobsh’s essay may reflect the fast-paced development of ideas in the field. Second is Gerald Barrier’s posthumously published essay on the “the legacy of [Sikh] history and contemporary challenges” (pp.1-16). This essay not only adds to his substantial contributions to the field but also suggests subject areas that Barrier considers will challenge Sikh studies in the future. Similarly, many of the essays urge the reader to consider the Sikh individual nowadays as a composite person whom it would be incorrect to define simply on the basis of the history of the community.

Increasingly, this same Sikh individual is also attracting varying academic enquiry – some of which is seen here. Consider the California- based Toby Johnson. He writes that “The issue of what it means to be a Sikh gets more complicated as Sikhs move farther away from Punjab, in both distance and time” (p.249). Johnson is researching the formation of a *khalsa*-centric identity in Californian Sikh children and to do so he uses Indian-published children’s literature such as the *janamsakhis*. Similarly, many essays in this volume address the Sikh who is no longer in Punjab - increasingly by writers who themselves are not in Punjab. This broadening appeal of the field may engender what Pashaura Singh calls “...a new phenomenon in the academy” (p.2).

The variety of subjects here also embodies the multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Sikhism and Sikhs. Theology is used firstly to analyse the Guru Granth Sahib as a primary source of the global concept of “*ek hi sarup*” (Kaur-Singh pp.39) and secondly to tackle the controversial idea of a Sikh “limited age of the miracles” that Prill (pp.130-145) borrows from Calvinism. Verne

Dusenbery and Darshan Tatla improve our knowledge on the diaspora's religious and secular motivations behind philanthropic donations (*vand shakko*) to Sikhism's homeland (pp.146-164). The book also reflects the concentration of Sikh study Chairs in California and the state's broadening relationship with the diaspora. Charles Townsend's analysis of *kirtan* in Sikh identity formation (pp. 208-227) and Gurveen Khurana's ethnography on *nagar kirtan* (pp.228-248) are both based on Sikh communities in South and North California respectively. Both students are also supervised by Chairs in the state.

Adding to this study of *bani* is Pashaura Singh's ethnomusicological focus on the broadcasts from Harmandir Sahib that fill many Sikh homes twice a day with Guru Arjun's *chaunkis* (pp.102-29). Sikh identity politics are expanded by Paul Wallace's historical review of the less studied difference between "Sikh militancy, Sikh violence and Sikh non-violence protest" (pp.85-101). This author's subject choice crafts a data-driven riposte to the popularised notion of Sikhs as a 'martial race'. Banerjee's research in East India's Shillong region is a deft reminder that Sikhs exist as a diaspora within India also (pp. 185-207). Opinderjit Takhar alone represents research in Britain with her continued interest in the nodal caste and religious identity constructs within the country's Valmiki and Ravidasi community (pp.165-184).

Overall, this book's longer-lasting contribution may be the new research that unpacks the social and cultural identity negotiation of Sikhs worldwide. The text also shows that these experiential writings can build on pioneering historical works by Hew Mcleod and Gerald Barrier. The result is 'subject-interactive' field work crowned with epistemologically rigorous writing. For this reviewer, this volume will assist "a community's relative lack of experience with analytic understanding of their tradition" (p.4) by providing findings obtained via engaging with the community itself. Pashaura Singh's book contains important new research on Sikhs that may characterise Sikh studies' appraisal of the *qaum*'s local nuances with regards to the globalising *panth*.

**Gurbachan Singh Jandu**

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Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristina Myrvold (eds), *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012 +266 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-1387-0 (hb) £65.00.

This valuable edited volume is the second joint output from the network of scholars working on Sikhs in Europe, convened by Kristina Myrvold and promising more publications in future. The present volume now substantially deepens insights into the transnational practices and politics of European Sikhs. The early history of Sikhs in Europe is discussed in a fascinating chapter by David Omissi on the deployment of Sikh soldiers in France and Belgium during

the First World War. He presents excerpts from the letters Sikh soldiers wrote to their families in Punjab about their experiences on European soil – a fascinating window onto the subjectivity of soldiers deployed to fight another man's war, illustrating both the power of colonial discourses on the metropole as well as resistance to them. Omissi brings out the exploration and curiosity the men have about Europe, too. They write home about their observations of French houses, the wealth of its countryside, the high levels of literacy and the apparent freedom between men and women. 'To travel is to see home in a different light, and perhaps to reflect critically on home', he writes (p.47).

Of the contemporary Sikh presence in mainland Europe, explicated by Shinder Thandi largely in terms of irregular migration, asylum and student flows, an important insight is given in the chapter by Quincy Cloet, Sara Cosemans and Idesbald Goddeeris on Sikh migration in and out of Belgium. They capture the complexity of mobilities, with transit countries becoming countries of settlement and vice versa, and the intra-diaspora connections across Europe: 'Sikh migration does not only consist of immigration to a particular country, but shows a much more varied pattern, including transit migration, return migration to India, circular migration between India and Europe, intradiasporic migration within Europe and/or the Atlantic world, and so on' (p.51). Barbara Bertolani's chapter on Sikhs in Italy illustrates how this operates through the reconstitution of kinship via marriage, with transnational marriages conducted not only with India but also with other European countries, according to the preferences for the young people concerned – particularly young women, who worry that a husband from India will have difficulty adjusting to the western lifestyle and may place too much responsibility on their shoulders. Federica Ferraris's chapter on travel narratives will be of interest to Punjab scholars as it documents not only the master narratives of roots tourism and visits back to ancestral villages, but also pilgrimages to gurdwaras in Pakistan, 'a search for a collective "ancestral religious motherland", a pre-partition Punjab which still hosts significant sites of Sikh tradition and its imperial and colonial history' (p.99). Revealingly, the travel narratives blur the boundaries between transnational migration and travel.

There are several useful chapters on the internet as a medium for transnational practices. Doris A. Jakobsh argues that diasporic 'Sikh technocrats' have produced a digital public sphere enforcing the Amritdhari body as the *sine qua non* of Sikhism, whilst Satnam Singh argues for the diversity of Sikh politics enabled through the internet and Jasjit Singh's chapter on young British Sikhs gives the very important and often neglected perspective of reception – how young Sikhs actually use and interpret what they find in cyberspace.

Most novel in the collection were the chapters by Knut A. Jacobsen, Kristina Myrvold and colleagues on religious institutions and practitioners. Jacobsen rightly advocates for there being a need for research on gurdwaras as hubs of transnationalism – of circulating copies of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (whose arrival in Italy is documented by Barbara Bertolani and Iqbal Singh), artefacts, ragis, granthis and kathavacaks, discourses and aesthetic experiences - as



exemplified in the performance of kirtan detailed by Jacobsen in his chapter. He also suggests a take on gurdwaras as sites for cultural revitalization, as Sikhism functions ‘in order to assure a sacralisation of a Punjabi cultural and ethnic identity’ (p.105). Myrvold presents intriguing life histories of individual *kathavacs* showing how they are drawn into preaching as a transnational livelihood, sometimes out of pragmatism and sometimes out of a sense of religious vocation. Particularly sensitive is her analysis of how they translate the problems of diasporic communities into a theological idiom. Jasjit Singh documents the entry of young British Sikhs as preachers on the European Sikh youth stage, whilst the influence of travelling preachers on theological debates is brought out in a chapter on the different forms taken by the Dasam Granth controversy across the Nordic countries.

In the first chapter, Shinder Thandi argues that there is not one Sikhs diaspora but rather ‘Sikhs in fact have multiple diasporas – each with their own pattern of settlement and level of community development, each negotiating their own space within mainstream “host” community and in managing internal differentiation’ (p.18). This call for sensitivity to the specificities of Sikh diasporic experience is very important. Perhaps it could also be strengthened with recourse to Pnina Werbner’s (2002) notion of a ‘chaordic’ diaspora, encompassing intersecting and diverging axes of identity and connection, such as caste and the Punjabi ecumene, as well as religion – as other chapters in the volume amply illustrate.

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### Kaveri Qureshi

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Gurinder Singh Mann, *Sikhism*, (Upper Saddle River [NJ]: Prentice Hall, 2004) (Religions of the World Series, series editor Ninian Smart), 128pp. ISBN 10: 0130409774 and 13: 9780130409775 (pb) \$19.

Doris K. Jakobsh, *Sikhism*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011) (Dimensions of Asian Spirituality Series, series editor Henry Rosemont, Jr.) xx1 + 134 pp. ISBN 9780824836010 (pb) no price given.

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *Sikhism: An Introduction*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2011) xv11 + 269 pp. ISBN 1848853211 (pb) \$25 and ISBN 9781848853218 (hb) \$73.

In spring 2012 I agreed to write a review comparing these three texts, partly because of my admiration for the Sikh community, and partly in the hope that one or more of the texts would be suitable for teaching my American students, most of whom know very little about the Sikhs. The tragedy and community response later that summer in Oak Creek, Wisconsin - less than 30 miles from my campus - have given both of these sentiments far greater intensity and urgency.

For the record, I don't consider myself an authority on the Sikhs, since my core research is on Hindu pilgrimage in north India. My graduate training gave me enough language proficiency to read Sikh sacred texts, albeit slowly and in *devanagari*, and my ongoing work has given me both an appreciation for the importance of sacred places, and for understanding people's behavior in and towards them. My present interest in the Sikhs sparked after I took students to Amritsar in 1999, and witnessed the community's lived religion there. Since then I've returned many times, and this growing interest led me to develop a full-semester class on the Sikhs in 2006, which I have taught twice since then. My perspective as a small-college teacher - in which faculty routinely teach courses outside their research specialties - will be the primary lens through which I will interpret and review these texts, and my primary criterion is their utility as a text for an introductory or higher-level course.

Mann's and Jakobsh's books share many similarities. Both were written as parts of a larger series - Prentice-Hall's "Religions of the World" and the University of Hawaii's "Dimensions of Asian Spirituality" respectively. Both are introductory texts for readers with little background on the Sikhs, and both do a fine job in dispelling that. Both texts are relatively short - each book's actual text is 117 pages - and I infer that these size constraints were imposed by the publisher. Mann's end materials (11 pp.) include a Glossary, Suggested Further Readings, and a brief index; Jakobsh's end materials (17 pp.) have a far more detailed Index and a List of Sources Cited and Recommended Readings, but do not include a Glossary, a surprising omission for an introductory text.

The texts choose different points of entry, as their initial chapter titles clearly show. Mann ("The Sikhs") gives a short overview on the Sikh community, on their overarching religious worldview, and on the regional context of the Punjab, whereas Jakobsh ("The Sources of the Sikh Tradition") focuses on sacred texts, particularly the *Guru Granth Sahib*. After this their structure is largely parallel - a large section (or sections) on the community's history and development, a section on religious beliefs and practices, and a section (or sections) on contemporary Sikh society - but there are clear internal differences. Mann devotes far greater attention to the community's historical development from Ranjit Singh to the present (20 pages to Jakobsh's 8 pages). This is partly because Jakobsh includes some of the material in Mann's chapter (e.g., the Sikh diaspora) in a stand-alone chapter at the end of her work, but these different emphases probably reflect the authors' differing experiences. Mann is a Sikh,

and lived in the Punjab well into his adult life; he was thus formed in a context in which Punjabi identity was central to Sikh identity. Jakobsh is neither Punjabi nor (as far as I know) a Sikh, and teaches in Canada, where the Sikhs are an immigrant group in the process of assimilating to another culture. Hence one can understand a perspective focusing first on Sikh religious identity.

Both texts are more than adequate for a general reader, but an intractable problem stemming from their brevity is lack of nuance - which after all, comes when one can address complexity, particularly with historical events and community attitudes. For the most part, the texts relate a rather linear narrative, though in fairness they do attempt to convey some of this complexity. One example can be seen in their accounts of the Khalsa's founding in 1699. Mann first quotes Teja Singh's traditional account, in which Guru Gobind Singh demanded the heads of five Sikhs, and then baptized these men as the Khalsa's first members. Mann highlights this story's symbolic elements - that the Five Beloved Ones came from different regions of India and different castes, and were thus a material symbol for the community's unification from its disparate parts - before describing the poet Sainapati's much sparer eyewitness account. Jakobsh describes the Guru calling for the heads of five Sikhs, and then gives several different accounts of what happened next - beginning with the tradition that Guru Gobind Singh actually killed them, and then brought them back to life - before discussing the larger importance of the Khalsa's founding to the Sikh community. She includes these traditional accounts in recognition that many Sikhs accept them as authentic, and that whether or not they can be supported by conventional historical investigation, they "...offer important insights into deeply held convictions in the community in terms of its identity, beliefs, and history (Jakobsh, p. 11)."

Another example of an attempt to grapple with complexity is the treatment of the *Dasam Granth*, an enormous and highly disparate anthology attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. On one hand, it contains material clearly connected with Sikh piety and history - among them Guru Gobind Singh's autobiography (*Bachitar Natak*), the *Zafarnama* (a letter of protest to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb), and several liturgical works (*Jaap*, *Savayye*, and *Chaupai*) that are regularly used in the worship. Yet other large sections contain stories of the Hindu gods drawn from Hindu mythology - which seem incompatible with the Sikh stress on a Single Divine Being - as well as a collection of often bawdy stories (*Pakhyan Charitar*) illustrating the wiles of women, which seems incongruous in a "religious" work. Historically the Sikh community seems to have given these differing elements selective attention (ignoring the problematic parts), but Mann notes that some of these elements have been "a source of tension in the tradition (76)." Both texts give brief and certainly accurate descriptions of the *Dasam Granth*, but the texts' relative brevity means that there is room for only one primary story. Still, either text will do a fine job providing a general reader with an overview of the Sikh tradition.

Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's book is something else altogether. Her text is

substantially longer: 233 pages of text, with another 36 pages of end materials (Glossary, List of Illustration and Picture Credits, Notes, Bibliography, and Index); this allows her to address the tradition with greater depth. Her book has a thematic rather than a chronological focus, in which each of the nine chapters focus on a different topic, “..to give the reader an in-depth understanding of an aspect of Sikhism, and .. at the same time to raise questions and concerns central to contemporary humanities and social sciences (xii).”

Her first three chapters examine pivotal historical moments: “Guru Nanak and the Origins of Sikhism,” “Guru Arjan and the Crystallization of the Sikh Faith,” and “Guru Gobind Singh and the Cultivation of Sikh Identity”. No one can doubt that these three Gurus are central to Sikh history, but the focus on particular figures rather than the larger narrative means that the parts of the story in between are often elided, losing the sense of a community’s organic, stage-by-stage development. For example, when Guru Arjan compiled the *Guru Granth Sahib*, significant portions of his Kartarpur *pothi* (book) were based on earlier texts, such as Guru Amar Das’s *Goindval Pothis*, and a book ascribed to Guru Nanak himself. As but one more example, there is only passing reference to Guru Tegh Bahadur, whose martyrdom by the Mughals has been generally interpreted as an act of moral courage and self-sacrifice. Yet this event was not only incredibly traumatic for the community - it was the second time in 70 years that the Mughal authorities had executed a Sikh Guru - but also surely influenced Guru Gobind Singh, his only son. This thematic focus on pivotal figures is intended to highlight their importance to the community rather than to provide a historical overview, but the loss here is precisely that sense of the community’s gradual development.

Later chapters cover many of the same topics as the other volumes, though in greater depth: there are chapters on Religious Beliefs, Worship and Rites of Passage, Colonial Encounters, Sikh Art, and the Diaspora. The 40-page chapter on Sikh art is particularly well done, and introduces Sikh art’s varying genres (*Janamsakhi* paintings, portraits of the Gurus, scriptural manuscripts, visual and material arts of the Sikh kingdoms, and modern painting) from the earliest days to the twentieth century. Given this chapter’s depth of focus, I was a little surprised to find no mention of lithographic poster art. Although these posters are commercially produced and could never be characterized as “fine” art, their ubiquity in the Indian religious landscape means that they have been central in forming Sikhs’ images of themselves and their community.

Another important chapter is “Sikh Metaphysics, Ethics, and Esthetics”, in which the author supports her points with frequent citations from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, accompanied by a transliteration of the original text. These citations show her clear command of the Sikh scriptures, and in fact one of her earlier publications, *The Name of My Beloved*, is a selection of translations from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Yet the back-and-forth movement between authorial voice and scriptural citation in this chapter sometimes makes the presentation feel a little jumpy, and the practice of citing single lines raises the question

whether any particular line is being presented in context. Since the average American reader cannot understand the original (transliterated) text, it seems reasonable to infer that this is not meant for them, but rather for readers within the Sikh community - as evidence that her text's ideas and assertions are firmly grounded in scriptural authority.

The book's pivotal sixth chapter, "Feminist Text in a Patriarchal Context", shows why such grounding is necessary. The author's goals are clearly stated in the book's introduction, and third among these is

...to recharge the Sikh community to live the liberating mode of existence intended by their Gurus. Beginning with the founder, the ten Sikh gurus created a window of opportunity to break out of the imprisonment of age-old customs and taboos, but somehow their radical egalitarianism and broadmindedness has not been fully implemented. Patriarchal values dominate the interpretation of their message, and ancient feudal norms govern social behavior. (xv-xvi).

At some primal level, this book is an exorcism - to banish attitudes and practices that have left women religiously marginalized, and to counteract a religious tradition/community/theology that has been hijacked by a "hyper-masculine culture" (102). She honestly and openly states that "female lenses are my key interpretive mechanism (xvi-xvii)", and admits that the book bears her subjective imprint; her avowedly feminist readings mean that this book and its interpretations are addressed as much to other members of the Sikh community as to the general public.

Given her identity as a woman from a Sikh family living in the United States, and given how deeply patriarchy and its values are embedded in Sikh society, I understand why she chooses this particular lens. Yet relying on only one lens - even if it is consciously chosen - is both illuminating and limiting. For example, though she notes that the Guru Granth Sahib describes The Supreme Reality (which she calls *Ik Oan Kar*) as transcending all limitations, and thus as both male AND female (*ape purakh ape hi nar* p. 104), the subsequent text focuses primarily on images of Mother, nurturer and bride. The text says nothing about parallel male images as father, king, and lord, except for warnings against conceiving *Ik Oan Kar* as a hierarchical, patriarchal male God. Yet if *Ik Oan Kar* genuinely transcends human experience and comprehension, *Ik Oan Kar* is also beyond gender, and thus both sets of metaphors need to be consciously deployed. Presenting only one side - even if it is the side that has been ignored or suppressed for much of Sikh history - gives an incomplete picture, at least to an ordinary reader unaware of that history.

All of these texts have their merits. Mann and Jakobsh give simple and easy-to-follow narratives and explanations. Singh gives significantly greater nuance to the elements on which she focuses, but in some sense this work is really two books - one directed to the general public, and another directed toward the Sikh

community. At the moment, none of these texts give the final word, and as an instructor I'm still waiting for the next step - a 300-page introductory text that gives a clear narrative, a more nuanced treatment of problematic points, and has addenda or appendices containing translations of primary source materials (e.g., hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Janam Sakhis, the Rehat Maryada, etc.) An introductory text containing these sorts of substantial resources will let readers experience the text themselves (albeit in translation), and come to their own decisions.

**Jim Lochtefeld**  
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## In Remembrance

### Shafqat Tanvir Mirza (1932-2012)

Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, a senior Pakistani journalist, writer and newspaper columnist passed away in Lahore on November 20, 2012. He had been suffering from lung cancer since the beginning of 2012.

With his demise, the movement for the promotion of Punjabi language in Pakistan has lost its most vocal advocate. Throughout his long career as one of the senior most Urdu and English journalists in Pakistan, where Punjabi is not taught in schools and Punjabi journalism is nonexistent, Shafqat Tanvir Mirza never wavered in his unfashionable and uncompromising stand in support of the Punjabi language. He distinguished himself in scholarly circles in Pakistan as an outstanding research scholar of the Punjabi language and became known as an encyclopaedia of Punjabi language, literature, culture and Punjab history. He used his highly respected credentials as a journalist and intellectual for his untiring promotion of the Punjabi language. For the past two decades, his weekly columns 'Punjabi Themes' and 'Punjabi Books' in the leading Pakistani English newspaper, *Dawn*, were the most forceful voices for the defence and promotion of the Punjabi language. Except for his weekly columns in *Dawn*, it was rare to hear even a few whispers in support of Punjabi language in the Pakistani media. During the last couple of years of his life, he was engaged in strongly opposing the People's Party government's plan to split the Punjab province and carve out a Saraiki province in south Punjab. The void created by the death of Shafqat Tanvir Mirza will be deeply felt by Punjabi activists in Pakistan for a long time to come.

Shafqat Tanvir Mirza was born on February 6, 1932 at Domeli, district Jhelum. He began his school education in Chakwal and later moved around with his family to different parts of Punjab, attending schools in Khushab, Wazirabad, Bahawalpur and Campbellpur. He graduated from Gordon College, Rawalpindi.

He started his life long career in journalism with an Urdu-language newspaper *Tameer* in 1949, while he was still a student in Gordon College, and he continued to work as a journalist until almost the end of his life. He joined Radio Pakistan in 1956 but was fired from his job after he raised his voice against General Ayub Khan's martial law in 1958. After that he worked for the *Civil and Military Gazette* until it was closed in 1964. He then joined the *Daily Imroze* which was the leading Urdu newspaper of that time. The *Daily Imroze* and *Pakistan Times* were run by the National Press Trust and some of the leading journalists and writers of Pakistan were associated with the National Press Trust newspapers. Here Shafqat Tanvir Mirza became part of a group of



luminaries that included Chiragh Hasan Hasrat, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Addullah Malik, Hamid Akhter, Mannu Bhai, Zaheer Baber and many others.

In 1970 Shafqat Tanvir Mirza launched the Pakistan People's Party's newspaper *Mussawat* with Manno Bhai and Hanif Ramey but after a few years, he moved back to *Daily Imroze*. In 1978, he was fired from *Daily Imroze* and was put behind bars for opposing General Zia's military government. He was arrested multiple times for his campaigns for freedom of speech and protests against military regimes. He spent his jail time in Central Jail, Karachi, Kot Lakhpat, Lahore and Central Jail, Bahawalpur. His wife was also arrested for protesting against the death sentence of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and spent some time with him at the Central Jail, Karachi. He worked for *Nawa-i-Waqt* for a while and regularly wrote for the left leaning weekly journal *Viewpoint* during General Zia's regime. After General Zia's death, he rejoined *Daily Imroze* and he was its editor when it was closed down in 1991. Since then he was a regular columnist for *Dawn*.

Shafqat Tanvir Mirza was a prolific writer. Besides writing several books in Punjabi, Urdu and English on Punjabi literature and history of Punjab, he also translated a number of works from English to Punjabi. Some of his important books are: *Tehreek-i-Azadi Vich Punjab da Hissa* (Punjabi), *Adab Raheen Punjab de Tareekh* (Punjabi), *Akhia Sachal Sarmast Nay* (Punjabi), *Resistance Themes in Punjabi Literature* (English), *Shah Hussain, A Biography* (Urdu), *Lahu Suhag* (Punjabi translation of *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca), *Booha Koeena* (Punjabi translation of *No Exit* by Jean Paul Sartre). He was awarded the Presidential Award of Pride of Performance.

Shafqat Tanvir Mirza is survived by his wife Tamkinat Ara, and daughter, Tabashra Bano.

**Safir Rammah**

December 2012

## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Articles submitted to the JPS should be original contributions; if an article is under consideration for any other journal, authors must indicate this on submission. Articles should be submitted in hard copy in triplicate, typed double-spaced throughout (including end-notes and references) with 1 inch margins. Contributors are required to provide an abstract of approximately 100 words which should be indented and located at the top of page 1. Typewritten copies must be accompanied by IBM-compatible word-process or discs in Microsoft Word. Discs should be labeled with the article, the author's name and software (including version) used. All submissions should be sent to:

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**Quotations.** Indent quotations of more than one sentence. For primary source citations give the name and location of oral informant/the archive in which the material is stored.

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The editors reserve the right to modify transliterations in the interest of consistency.

No full stop after abbreviations e.g. Dr, MP, MLA, CPI and no apostrophe in plurals such as MPs, the 1930s. % to be written as per cent.

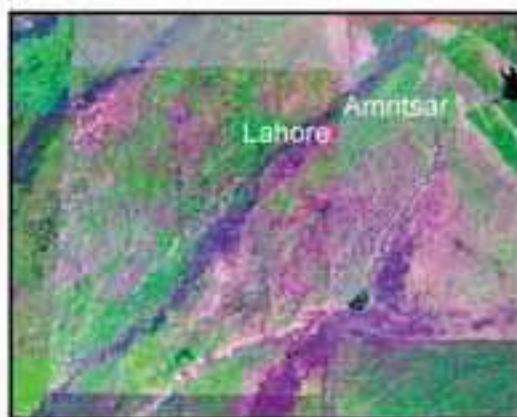
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Centered around the cities of Amritsar and Lahore, the region of Punjab spreads from Delhi in the Southeast to Peshawar in the Northwest, and connects the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and the Middle East. Beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization, the region has played a pivotal role in the cultural, economic, and political development of India. The *Journal of Punjab Studies* is a forum for interdisciplinary and comparative scholarship on the region of Punjab and Punjabis living overseas.